



HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

An Introduction
to Behavior
and Health

Tenth Edition

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An Introduction
to Behavior
and Health

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BRIEF CONTENTS

PART 1 Foundations of Health Psychology

- Chapter 1** Introducing Health Psychology 3
- Chapter 2** Conducting Health Research 21
- Chapter 3** Seeking and Receiving Health Care 43
- Chapter 4** Adhering to Healthy Behavior 65

PART 2 Stress, Pain, and Coping

- Chapter 5** Defining, Measuring, and Managing Stress 95
- Chapter 6** Understanding Stress, Immunity, and Disease 129
- Chapter 7** Understanding and Managing Pain 155
- Chapter 8** Considering Alternative Approaches 187

PART 3 Behavior and Chronic Disease

- Chapter 9** Behavioral Factors in Cardiovascular Disease 221
- Chapter 10** Behavioral Factors in Cancer 251
- Chapter 11** Living with Chronic Illness 275

PART 4 Behavioral Health

- Chapter 12** Smoking Tobacco 305
- Chapter 13** Using Alcohol and Other Drugs 335
- Chapter 14** Eating and Weight 367
- Chapter 15** Exercising 399

PART 5 Looking Toward the Future

- Chapter 16** Future Challenges 427

Glossary 448

References 454

Name Index 523

Subject Index 565



CONTENTS

Preface xiii

About the Authors xvii

PART 1 Foundations of Health Psychology

1 Introducing Health Psychology 3

CHAPTER

1-1 The Changing Field of Health 3

Real-World Profile of COVID-19 Pandemic 4

Patterns of Disease and Death 6

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? College is Good for Your Health 8

Escalating Cost of Medical Care 10

What is Health? 10

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? It Takes More Than a Virus to Give You a Cold 11

IN SUMMARY 12

1-2 Psychology's Relevance for Health 13

The Contribution of Psychosomatic Medicine 13

The Emergence of Behavioral Medicine 14

The Emergence of Health Psychology 15

IN SUMMARY 16

1-3 The Profession of Health Psychology 16

The Training of Health Psychologists 16

The Work of Health Psychologists 16

Real-World Profile of Angela Bryan 17

IN SUMMARY 18

Questions 18

Suggested Readings 19

2 Conducting Health Research 21

CHAPTER

CHECK YOUR BELIEFS About Health Research 22

2-1 The Placebo in Treatment and Research 22

Treatment and the Placebo 22

Real-World Profile of Sylvester Colligan 23

Research and the Placebo 24

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Prescribing Placebos May Be Considered Ethical 25

IN SUMMARY 26

2-2 Research Methods in Psychology 26

Correlational Studies 26

Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Studies 27

Experimental Designs 28

Ex Post Facto Designs 29

IN SUMMARY 29

2-3 Research Methods in Epidemiology 29

Observational Methods 30

Randomized Controlled Trials 30

Meta-Analysis 32

An Example of Epidemiological Research:

The Alameda County Study 32

Becoming an Informed Reader of Health-Related Research on the Internet 33

IN SUMMARY 34

2-4 Determining Causation 34

The Risk Factor Approach 34

Cigarettes and Disease: Is There a Causal Relationship? 35

IN SUMMARY 36

2-5 Research Tools 37

The Role of Theory in Research 37

The Role of Psychometrics in Research 38

IN SUMMARY 39

Questions 39

Suggested Readings 40

3 Seeking and Receiving Health Care 43

CHAPTER

3-1 Seeking Medical Attention 43

CHECK YOUR BELIEFS Regarding Seeking and Receiving Health Care 44

Real-World Profile of Lance Armstrong 45

Illness Behavior 46

The Sick Role 51

IN SUMMARY 52

3-2 Seeking Medical Information from Nonmedical Sources 53

The Internet 53

Lay Referral Network 53

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? There is Controversy about Childhood Vaccinations 54

3-3 Receiving Medical Care 55

Limited Access to Medical Care 55

Choosing a Practitioner 56

Being in the Hospital 58

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Hospitals May Be a Leading Cause of Death 59

IN SUMMARY 61

Questions 62

Suggested Readings 63

4 Adhering to Healthy Behavior 65

CHAPTER

4-1 Issues in Adherence 65

CHECK YOUR BELIEFS Regarding Adhering to Healthy Behavior 66

What is Adherence? 66

How is Adherence Measured? 66

Real-World Profile of Rajiv Kumar 67

How Frequent is Nonadherence? 68

What are the Barriers to Adherence? 69

IN SUMMARY 70

4-2 What Factors Predict Adherence? 70

Disease Severity 70

Treatment Characteristics 70

Personal Factors 71

Environmental Factors 72

Interaction of Factors 74

IN SUMMARY 75

4-3 Why and How Do People Adhere to Healthy Behaviors? 75

Continuum Theories of Health Behavior 76

IN SUMMARY 81

Stage Theories of Health Behavior 81

IN SUMMARY 85

4-4 The Intention–Behavior Gap 85

Behavioral Willingness 85

Implementational Intentions 86

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Both Real and Online Social Networks Can Influence Health 86

IN SUMMARY 87

4-5 Improving Adherence 88

IN SUMMARY 90

BECOMING HEALTHIER 90

Questions 91

Suggested Readings 92

PART 2 Stress, Pain, and Coping

5 Defining, Measuring, and Managing Stress 95

CHAPTER

5-1 The Nervous System and the Physiology of Stress 95

CHECK HEALTH RISKS Life Events Scale for Students 96

The Peripheral Nervous System 96

Real-World Profile of COVID-19 Pandemic 97

The Neuroendocrine System 98

Physiology of the Stress Response 101

IN SUMMARY 103

5-2 Theories of Stress 103

Selye's View 103

Lazarus's View 105

IN SUMMARY 106

5-3 Sources of Stress 106

Cataclysmic Events 106

Life Events 108

Daily Hassles 108

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Vacations Relieve Work Stress ... But Not for Long 111

IN SUMMARY 112

5-4 Measurement of Stress 112

Methods of Measurement 112

IN SUMMARY 114

5-5 Coping with Stress 114

Personal Resources That Influence Coping 114

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Pets May Be Better Support Providers Than People 117

Personal Coping Strategies 117

IN SUMMARY 119

5-6 Behavioral Interventions for Managing Stress 119

Relaxation Training 119

BECOMING HEALTHIER 120

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy 121

Emotional Disclosure 122

Mindfulness 124

IN SUMMARY 125

Questions 126

Suggested Readings 127

CHAPTER 6 Understanding Stress, Immunity, and Disease 129

6-1 Physiology of the Immune System 129

Real-World Profile of Big City Taxi Drivers 130

Organs of the Immune System 130

Function of the Immune System 131

Immune System Disorders 133

IN SUMMARY 136

6-2 Psychoneuroimmunology 136

History of Psychoneuroimmunology 136

Research in Psychoneuroimmunology 137

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Pictures of Disease are Enough to Activate the Immune System 137

Physical Mechanisms of Influence 139

IN SUMMARY 140

6-3 Does Stress Cause Disease? 140

The Diathesis–Stress Model 140

Stress and Disease 141

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Being a Sports Fan May Be a Danger to Your Health 145

Stress and Psychological Disorders 148

IN SUMMARY 151

BECOMING HEALTHIER 152

Questions 152

Suggested Readings 152

CHAPTER 7 Understanding and Managing Pain 155

7-1 Pain and the Nervous System 155

CHECK YOUR EXPERIENCES

Regarding Your Most Recent Episode of Pain 156

Real-World Profile of Pain 157

The Somatosensory System 157

The Spinal Cord 158

The Brain 158

Neurotransmitters and Pain 160

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Emotional and Physical Pain are Mainly the Same in the Brain 160

The Modulation of Pain 161

IN SUMMARY 162

7-2 The Meaning of Pain 162

The Definition of Pain 163

The Experience of Pain 163

7-3 Theories of Pain 166

IN SUMMARY 169

7-4 Pain Syndromes 169

Headache Pain 170

Arthritis Pain 171

Cancer Pain 172

Phantom Limb Pain 172

IN SUMMARY 173

7-5 The Measurement of Pain 174

Self-Reports 174

Behavioral Assessments 176

Physiological Measures 176

IN SUMMARY 177

7-6 Managing Pain 177

Medical Approaches to Managing Pain 177

Behavioral Techniques for Managing Pain 180

IN SUMMARY 183

Questions 184

Suggested Readings 185

8 Considering Alternative Approaches 187

CHAPTER

CHECK YOUR HEALTH CARE PREFERENCES

About Health Research 188

8-1 Alternative Medical Systems 188

Real-World Profile of T. R. Reid 189

Traditional Chinese Medicine 189

Ayurvedic Medicine 190

IN SUMMARY 192

8-2 Alternative Products and Diets 192

IN SUMMARY 193

8-3 Manipulative Practices 194

Chiropractic Treatment 194

Massage 194

IN SUMMARY 196

8-4 Mind–Body Medicine 196

Meditation and Yoga 196

BECOMING HEALTHIER 197

Qi Gong and Tai Chi 198

Biofeedback 199

Hypnotic Treatment 200

Physiology and Mind–Body Medicine 201

IN SUMMARY 201

8-5 Who Uses Complementary and Alternative Medicine? 202

Culture, Ethnicity, and Gender 202

Motivations for Seeking Alternative Treatment 203

IN SUMMARY 204

8-6 How Effective are Alternative Treatments? 204

Alternative Treatments for Anxiety, Stress, and Depression 205

Alternative Treatments for Pain 206

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Humans are Not the Only Ones Who Benefit from Acupuncture 209

Alternative Treatments for Other Conditions 210

Limitations of Alternative Therapies 215

Integrative Medicine 216

IN SUMMARY 217

Questions 218

Suggested Readings 219

PART 3 Behavior and Chronic Disease

9 Behavioral Factors in Cardiovascular Disease 221

CHAPTER

9-1 The Cardiovascular System 221

CHECK YOUR HEALTH RISKS

Regarding Cardiovascular Disease 222

Real-World Profile of Emilia Clarke 223

The Coronary Arteries 223

Coronary Artery Disease 224

Stroke 226

Blood Pressure 227

IN SUMMARY 228

9-2 The Changing Rates of Cardiovascular Disease 230

Reasons for the Decline in Death Rates 230

Heart Disease Throughout the World 231

IN SUMMARY 231

9-3 Risk Factors in Cardiovascular Disease 232

Inherent Risk Factors 232

Physiological Conditions 234

Behavioral Factors 236

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Chocolate May Help Prevent Heart Disease 237

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Nearly All the Risk for Stroke is Due to Modifiable Factors 238

Psychosocial Factors 239

IN SUMMARY 242

9-4 Reducing Cardiovascular Risks 243

Before Diagnosis: Preventing First Heart

Attacks 243

After Diagnosis: Rehabilitating Cardiac Patients 246

BECOMING HEALTHIER 247

IN SUMMARY 248

Questions 248

Suggested Readings 249

10 Behavioral Factors in Cancer 251

CHAPTER

10-1 What is Cancer? 251

CHECK YOUR HEALTH RISKS Regarding Cancer 252

Real-World Profile of Steve Jobs 253

10-2 The Changing Rates of Cancer Deaths 253

Cancers with Decreasing Death Rates 254

Cancers with Increasing Incidence and Mortality Rates 255

IN SUMMARY 256

10-3 Cancer Risk Factors Beyond Personal Control 257

Inherent Risk Factors for Cancer 257

Environmental Risk Factors for Cancer 258

IN SUMMARY 259

10-4 Behavioral Risk Factors for Cancer 259

Smoking 260

Diet 262

Alcohol 264

Sedentary Lifestyle 264

Ultraviolet Light Exposure 264

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Cancer Prevention Prevents More Than Cancer 266

Sexual Behavior 266

Psychosocial Risk Factors in Cancer 267

IN SUMMARY 267

10-5 Living with Cancer 268

Problems with Medical Treatments for Cancer 268

Adjusting to a Diagnosis of Cancer 269

Social Support for Cancer Patients 270

Psychological Interventions for Cancer Patients 270

IN SUMMARY 271

Questions 272

Suggested Readings 272

11 Living with Chronic Illness 275

CHAPTER

11-1 The Impact of Chronic Disease 275

Real-World Profile of Nick Jonas 276

Impact on the Patient 276

Impact on the Family 278

IN SUMMARY 279

11-2 Living with Alzheimer's Disease 279

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Using Your Mind May Help Prevent Losing Your Mind 281

Helping the Patient 282

Helping the Family 283

IN SUMMARY 284

11-3 Adjusting to Diabetes 284

The Physiology of Diabetes 284

The Impact of Diabetes 286

Health Psychology's Involvement with Diabetes 287

IN SUMMARY 288

11-4 The Impact of Asthma 289

The Disease of Asthma 289

Managing Asthma 290

IN SUMMARY 291

11-5 Dealing with HIV and AIDS 292

Incidence and Mortality Rates for HIV/AIDS 292

Symptoms of HIV and AIDS 294

The Transmission of HIV 295

Psychologists' Role in the HIV Epidemic 296

BECOMING HEALTHIER 299

IN SUMMARY 299

11-6 Facing Death 300

Adjusting to Terminal Illness 300

Grieving 301

IN SUMMARY 302

Questions 302

Suggested Readings 303

PART 4 Behavioral Health

12 Smoking Tobacco 305

CHAPTER

12-1 Smoking and the Respiratory System 305

CHECK HEALTH RISKS Regarding Tobacco Use 306

Real-World Profile of Famous Former Smokers 306

Functioning of the Respiratory System 306

What Components in Smoke Are Dangerous? 309

IN SUMMARY 309

12-2 A Brief History of Tobacco Use 309

12-3 Choosing to Smoke 310

Who Smokes and Who Does Not? 311

Why Do People Smoke? 313

IN SUMMARY 318

12-4 Health Consequences of Tobacco Use 318

Cigarette Smoking 318

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Smoking is Related to Mental Illness 320

Cigar and Pipe Smoking 321

E-cigarettes 321

Passive Smoking 322

Smokeless Tobacco 323

IN SUMMARY 323

12-5 Interventions for Reducing Smoking Rates 324

Deterring Smoking 324

Quitting Smoking 324

Who Quits and Who Does Not? 326

Relapse Prevention 327

IN SUMMARY 328

12-6 Effects of Quitting 328

BECOMING HEALTHIER 329

Quitting and Weight Gain 329

Health Benefits of Quitting 331

IN SUMMARY 331

Questions 332

Suggested Readings 333

13 Using Alcohol and Other Drugs 335

CHAPTER

Alcohol Consumption—Yesterday and Today 335

13-1 A Brief History of Alcohol Consumption 335

CHECK YOUR HEALTH RISKS Regarding Alcohol and Drug Use 336

Real-World Profile of Daniel Radcliffe 336

13-2 The Prevalence of Alcohol Consumption Today 338

IN SUMMARY 340

13-3 The Effects of Alcohol 340

13-4 The Hazards of Alcohol 342

13-5 The Benefits of Alcohol 344

IN SUMMARY 346

13-6 Why Do People Drink? 347

Disease Models 348

Cognitive-Physiological Theories 349

The Social Learning Model 351

IN SUMMARY 352

13-7 Changing Problem Drinking 352

Change Without Therapy 353

Treatments Oriented Toward Abstinence 353

Controlled Drinking 354

The Problem of Relapse 355

IN SUMMARY 355

13-8 Other Drugs 356

Health Effects 356

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...?

Brain Damage is Not a Common Risk of Drug Use 357

BECOMING HEALTHIER 360

Drug Misuse and Abuse 361

Treatment for Drug Abuse 362

Preventing and Controlling

Drug Use 363

IN SUMMARY 364

Questions 364

Suggested Readings 365

14 Eating and Weight 367

CHAPTER

14-1 The Digestive System 367

CHECK YOUR HEALTH RISKS
Regarding Eating and Controlling
Your Weight 368

Real-World Profile of Danny Cahill 368

14-2 Factors in Weight Maintenance 370

Experimental Starvation 370
Experimental Overeating 371

IN SUMMARY 372

14-3 Overeating and Obesity 372

What is Obesity? 373
Why are Some People Obese? 375

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? You May Need
to Nap Rather Than to Diet 377

How Unhealthy is Obesity? 379

IN SUMMARY 380

14-4 Dieting 382

Approaches to Losing Weight 382
Is Dieting a Good Choice? 386

IN SUMMARY 386

14-5 Eating Disorders 387

Anorexia Nervosa 388
Bulimia 391
Binge Eating Disorder 393

BECOMING HEALTHIER 394

IN SUMMARY 396

Questions 396

Suggested Readings 397

15 Exercising 399

CHAPTER

15-1 Types of Physical Activity 399

CHECK YOUR HEALTH RISKS Regarding Exercise and
Physical Activity 400

Real-World Profile of Ricky Gervais 400

15-2 Reasons for Exercising 401

Physical Fitness 401
Weight Control 402

IN SUMMARY 403

15-3 Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health 404

Early Studies 404
Later Studies 405
Do Women and Men Benefit Equally? 406
Physical Activity and Cholesterol Levels 406

IN SUMMARY 407

15-4 Other Health Benefits of Physical Activity 407

Protection Against Cancer 407
Prevention of Bone Density Loss 408
Improved Sleep 408
Control of Diabetes 408
Psychological Benefits of Physical
Activity 409

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...?

It's Never Too Late—or Too Early 409

IN SUMMARY 413

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...?

Exercise Can Help You Learn 413

15-5 Hazards of Physical Activity 414

Exercise Addiction 414
Injuries from Physical Activity 417
Death During Exercise 418
Reducing Exercise Injuries 418

IN SUMMARY 419

15-6 How Much is Enough but Not Too Much? 419

15-7 Improving Adherence to Physical Activity 420

BECOMING HEALTHIER 421

IN SUMMARY 424

Questions 424

Suggested Readings 425

PART 5 Looking Toward the Future

16 Future Challenges 427

CHAPTER

16-1 Challenges for Healthier People 427

Real-World Profile of Dwayne and Robyn 428

Increasing the Span of Healthy Life 430

Reducing Health Disparities 431

WOULD YOU BELIEVE...? Health Literacy Can Improve by “Thinking Outside the Box” 433

IN SUMMARY 435

16-2 Outlook for Health Psychology 436

Progress in Health Psychology 436

Future Challenges for Health

Care 436

Will Health Psychology Continue to Grow? 441

IN SUMMARY 442

16-3 Making Health Psychology Personal 442

Understanding Your Risks 442

What Can You Do to Cultivate a Healthy

Lifestyle? 445

IN SUMMARY 446

Questions 447

Suggested Readings 447

Glossary 448

References 454

Name Index 523

Subject Index 565



PREFACE

Health is a far different phenomenon today than it was just a century ago. Most serious diseases and disorders now result from people's behavior. People smoke, eat unhealthily, do not exercise, or cope ineffectively with the stresses of modern life. As you will learn in this book, psychology—the science of behavior—is increasingly relevant to understanding physical health. *Health psychology* is the scientific study of behaviors relating to health enhancement, disease prevention, safety, and rehabilitation.

The first edition of this book, published in the 1980s, was one of the first undergraduate texts to cover the then-emerging field of health psychology. Now, in this tenth edition, *Health Psychology: An Introduction to Behavior and Health* remains a preeminent undergraduate textbook in health psychology.

The Tenth Edition

This tenth edition retains the core aspects that have kept this book a leader throughout the decades: (1) a balance between the science and applications of the field of health psychology and (2) a clear and engaging review of classic and cutting-edge research on behavior and health.

The tenth edition of *Health Psychology: An Introduction to Behavior and Health* has five parts. Part 1, which includes the first four chapters, lays a solid foundation in research and theory for understanding subsequent chapters and approaches the field by considering the overarching issues involved in seeking medical care and adhering to health care regimens. Part 2 deals with stress, pain, and managing these conditions through conventional and alternative medicine. Part 3 discusses heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases. Part 4 includes chapters on tobacco use, alcohol, eating and weight, and physical activity. Part 5 looks toward future challenges in health psychology and addresses how to apply health knowledge to one's life to become healthier.

What's New?

The tenth edition reorganizes several chapters to better emphasize the theoretical underpinnings of health behavior. For example, Chapter 4 focuses on adherence to healthy behavior and presents both classic and contemporary theories of health behavior, including recent research on the “intention–behavior gap.” Readers of the tenth edition will benefit from the most up-to-date review of health behavior theories—and their applications—on the market. They will also be able to hone in on key concepts and topics highlighted in the Learning Objectives placed at the beginning of each chapter.

The tenth edition also features new boxes on important and timely topics such as

- The Covid-19 Pandemic
- Why is there a controversy about childhood vaccinations?
- Do online social networks influence your health?
- How much of your risk for stroke is due to behavior? (Answer: nearly *all*)
- Does drug use cause brain damage?
- Can sleep deprivation lead to obesity?
- Can exercise help you learn?

Other new or reorganized topics within the chapters include:

- Several Real-World Profiles, including the COVID-19 pandemic, pain patients, T. R. Reid, Emilia Clarke, and Nick Jonas.
- Illustration of the evolving nature of health research in Chapter 2, through examples of studies on the link between diet and colon cancer.
- New research on the role of **stigma** in influencing people's decision to seek medical care, in Chapter 3.
- The role of **optimism** and **positive mood** in coping with stress, in Chapter 5.
- **Mindfulness** as a useful technique for managing stress (Chapter 5), managing pain (Chapter 7), and as a promising therapy for binge eating disorder (Chapter 14).

- Stress and its influence on the length of **telomeres**, in Chapter 6.
- **Marriage** as a key factor in predicting survival following cancer diagnosis, in Chapter 10.
- The use of **dignity therapy** to address psychosocial issues faced by terminal patients, in Chapter 11.
- The use of **smartphone “apps” and fitness trackers** in promoting physical activity, in Chapter 15.

What Has Been Retained?

In this revision, we retained the most popular features that made this text a leader over the past two decades. These features include (1) “Real-World Profiles” for each chapter, (2) chapter-opening questions; (3) a “Check Your Health Risks” box in most chapters; (4) one or more “Would You Believe . . .?” boxes in each chapter; and (5) a “Becoming Healthier” feature in many chapters. These features stimulate critical thinking, engage readers in the topic, and provide valuable tips to enhance personal well-being.

Real-World Profiles Millions of people—including celebrities—deal with the issues we describe in this book. To highlight the human side of health psychology, we open each chapter with a profile of a person in the real world. Many of these profiles are of famous people, whose health issues may not always be well known. Their cases provide intriguing examples, such as Barack Obama’s attempt to quit smoking, Lance Armstrong’s delays in seeking treatment for cancer, Steve Jobs’s fight with cancer, Halle Berry’s diabetes, Daniel Radcliffe’s alcohol abuse, and Ricky Gervais’s efforts to increase physical activity. We also include a profile of “celebrities” in the world of health psychology, including Dr. Angela Bryan, Dr. Norman Cousins, and Dr. Rajiv Kumar, to give readers a better sense of the personal motivation and activities of those in the health psychology and medical fields.

Questions and Answers In this text, we adopt a *preview, read, and review* method to facilitate student’s learning and recall. Each chapter begins with a series of *Questions* that organize the chapter, preview the material, and enhance active learning. As each chapter unfolds, we reveal the answers through a discussion of relevant research findings. At the end of each major topic, an *In Summary* statement recaps the topic. Then, at the end of the chapter, *Answers* to the chapter-opening questions appear. In this manner, students benefit

from many opportunities to engage with the material throughout each chapter.

Check Your Health Risks At the beginning of most chapters, a “Check Your Health Risks” box personalizes material in each chapter. Each box consists of several health-related behaviors or attitudes that readers should check before looking at the rest of the chapter. After checking the items that apply to them and then becoming familiar with the chapter’s material, readers will develop a more research-based understanding of their health risks. A special “Check Your Health Risks” appears inside the front cover of the book. Students should complete this exercise before they read the book and look for answers as they proceed through the chapters (or check the website for the answers).

Would You Believe . . .? Boxes We keep the popular “Would You Believe . . .?” boxes, adding many new ones and updating those we retained. Each box highlights a particularly intriguing finding in health research. These boxes explode preconceived notions, present unusual findings, and challenge students to take an objective look at issues that they may not have evaluated carefully.

Becoming Healthier Embedded in most chapters is a “Becoming Healthier” box with advice on how to use the information in the chapter to enact a healthier lifestyle. Although some people may not agree with all these recommendations, each is based on the most current research findings. We believe that if you follow these guidelines, you will increase your chances of a long and healthy life.

Other Changes and Additions

We have made several subtle changes in this edition that we believe make it an even stronger book than its predecessors. More specifically, we

- Replaced old references with more recent ones
- Reorganized many sections of chapters to improve the flow of information
- Added several new tables and figures to aid students’ understanding of difficult concepts
- Highlighted the biopsychosocial approach to health psychology, examining issues and data from biological, psychological, and social viewpoints
- Drew from the growing body of research from around the world on health to give the book a more international perspective

- Recognized and emphasized gender issues whenever appropriate
- Retained our emphasis on theories and models that strive to explain and predict health-related behaviors

Writing Style

With each edition, we work to improve our connection with readers. Although this book explores complex issues and difficult topics, we use clear, concise, and comprehensible language and an informal, lively writing style. We write this book for an upper-division undergraduate audience, and it should be easily understood by students with a minimal background in psychology and biology. Health psychology courses typically draw students from a variety of college majors, so some elementary material in our book may be repetitive for some students. For other students, this material will fill in the background they need to comprehend the information within the field of health psychology.

Technical terms appear in **boldface type**, and a definition usually appears at that point in the text. These terms also appear in an end-of-the-book glossary.

Instructional Aids

Besides the glossary at the end of the book, we supply several other features to help both students and instructors. These include stories of people whose behavior typifies the topic, frequent summaries within each chapter, and annotated suggested readings.

Within-Chapter Summaries

Rather than wait until the end of each chapter to present a lengthy chapter summary, we place shorter summaries at key points within each chapter. In general, these summaries correspond to each major topic in a chapter. We believe these shorter, frequent summaries keep readers on track and promote a better understanding of the chapter's content.

Annotated Suggested Readings

At the end of each chapter are three or four annotated suggested readings that students may wish to examine. We chose these readings for their capacity to shed additional light on major topics in a chapter. Most of these

suggested readings are quite recent, but we also selected several that have lasting interest. We include only readings that are intelligible to the average college student and that are accessible in most college and university libraries.

MindTap® Psychology: We now provide *MindTap* in the tenth edition. *MindTap for Health Psychology 10th Edition* is the digital learning solution that helps instructors engage and transform today's students into critical thinkers. Through paths of dynamic assignments and applications that you can personalize, real-time course analytics, and an accessible reader, MindTap helps you turn cookie cutter into cutting edge, apathy into engagement, and memorizers into higher-level thinkers. As an instructor using MindTap you have at your fingertips the right content and unique set of tools curated specifically for your course all in an interface designed to improve workflow and save time when planning lessons and course structures. The control to build and personalize your course is all yours, focusing on the most relevant material while also lowering costs for your students. Stay connected and informed in your course through real-time student tracking that provides the opportunity to adjust the course as needed based on analytics of interactivity in the course.

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John thanks all his past undergraduate students for making health psychology such a thrill to teach. This book is dedicated to them and to the future generation of health psychology students.



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In the early 1980s, Linda and Jess became interested in the developing field of health psychology, which led to their coauthoring the first edition of this book. They watched the field of health psychology emerge and grow, and the subsequent editions of the book reflect that growth and development.

Their interests converge in health psychology but diverge in other areas of psychology. Jess carried his

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John stays healthy by running the roads and trails near his home. John is also known for subjecting students and colleagues to his singing and guitar playing (go ahead, look him up on YouTube).



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 1-1** Recognize how the major causes of death have changed over the last century
- 1-2** Understand how factors such as age, ethnicity, and income relate now to the risk of disease and death
- 1-3** Contrast the biomedical model with the biopsychosocial model of health
- 1-4** Trace the expanding role of psychology in understanding physical health, from its roots in psychosomatic medicine and behavioral medicine to its current role in the field of health psychology
- 1-5** Familiarize yourself with the profession of health psychology, including how health psychologists are trained and the varied types of work that they do

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Real-World Profile of Angela Bryan

- The Changing Field of Health
- Psychology's Relevance for Health
- The Profession of Health Psychology

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on three basic questions:

1. How have views of health changed?
2. How did psychology become involved in health care?
3. What type of training do health psychologists receive, and what kinds of work do they do?

CHAPTER 1

Introducing Health Psychology

1-1 The Changing Field of Health

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1-1 Recognize how the major causes of death have changed over the last century
- 1-2 Understand how factors such as age, ethnicity, and income relate now to the risk of disease and death
- 1-3 Contrast the biomedical model with the biopsychosocial model of health

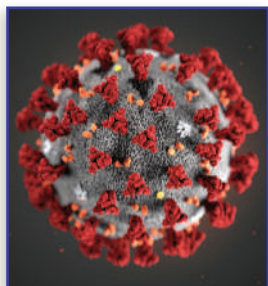
“We are now living well enough and long enough to slowly fall apart” (Sapolsky, 1998, p. 2).

The field of health psychology developed relatively recently—the 1970s, to be exact—to address the challenges presented by the changing field of health and health care. A century ago, the average **life expectancy** in the United States was approximately 50 years of age, far shorter than it is now. When people in the United States died, they died largely from infectious diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, diarrhea, and enteritis (see **Figure 1.1**). These conditions resulted from contact with impure drinking water, contaminated foods, or sick people. People might seek medical care only after they became ill, but medicine had few cures to offer. The duration of most diseases—such as typhoid fever, pneumonia, and diphtheria—was short; a person either died or got well in a matter of weeks. People felt limited responsibility for contracting a contagious disease because such a disease was not controllable.

Life and death are now dramatically different than they were a century ago. Life expectancy in the United States is nearly 80 years of age, with more Americans now than ever living past their 100th birthday. Over 30 countries boast even longer life expectancies than the United States, with Japan boasting the longest at 84 years of age. Public sanitation for most citizens



Real-World Profile of COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Alissa Eckert, MS, Dan Higgins, MAMS/CDC
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

This is an image of a SARS-CoV-2 virus. It is tiny, only 100 nanometers in diameter. It would take 1,000 of these, lined up side to side, to make a speck that could be seen by even the sharpest of human eyes.

Yet this virus was the cause of the global COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented public health crisis. In the first year of its emergence, COVID-19 resulted in over nearly 2 million deaths, economic collapses, school and business closures, unemployment, and a fundamental shift in how humans interact with one another. How could a virus so small have such a devastating impact?

The SARS-CoV-2 virus cannot reproduce on its own; it requires a host, such as a human, to spread. As such, the SARS-CoV-2 virus is a biological disease-causing agent, but its spread is due to human behavior. It is passed from person to person mainly through close, interpersonal contact with an infected person. People's behavior, in turn, is shaped by psychological, social, and cultural factors, including their beliefs about risk and severity of infection, adherence to preventive measures, their perceptions of what others around them do, and the cultural environment in which they live. For example, some countries such as Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea endorsed immediate and strict social policies to contain the potential spread of the virus. Other countries such as Sweden did not, at least immediately. Even within countries such as the United States, people's behaviors varied widely from state to state, as did the infection rates between communities.

Among those infected by SARS-CoV-2, the potential for severe illness or death also depends on factors influenced by behavior. Older adults are at greatest risk, as well as people with underlying chronic conditions such as diabetes, cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and obesity. As you will learn in this book, the development and management of these medical conditions are influenced, to some degree, by people's past and current behavior. The immune system's ability to fight off an infection, too, can be diminished due to stress, sleep loss, depression, and loneliness; rates of such experiences and conditions increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some ethnic groups were at greater risk of illness than others, with these disparities due likely to a combination of environmental, economic, behavioral, and social factors.

When vaccines and cures are available for COVID-19, behavior remains important. People will need to choose to obtain vaccinations or adhere to treatments. These behaviors, again, are shaped by psychological, social, and cultural factors, including beliefs about effectiveness or support from health care providers and family.

The COVID-19 pandemic, like many other health issues we will review in this book, is more than simply a matter of biology, but a matter of behavior as well. For this reason, the field of health psychology emerged and has adopted a **biopsychosocial model of health**, which we introduce in this chapter. The biopsychosocial model accounts for the complex ways that biology, behavior, beliefs, emotions, the social environment, and culture all interact to either increase our risk of illness or help us remain healthy. The rest of this book will cover many issues that are relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic, including how research contributes to our knowledge of behavioral factors in health (Chapter 2), when and why people seek medical care (Chapter 3), why people do not always engage in healthy behaviors (Chapter 4), stress and its role in disease (Chapters 5 and 6), and how behavior relates to health and chronic illness (Chapters 9 through 15). As you read the pages ahead, you will see many examples of the central premise of health psychology: While illness is based in biology, our behavior matters.

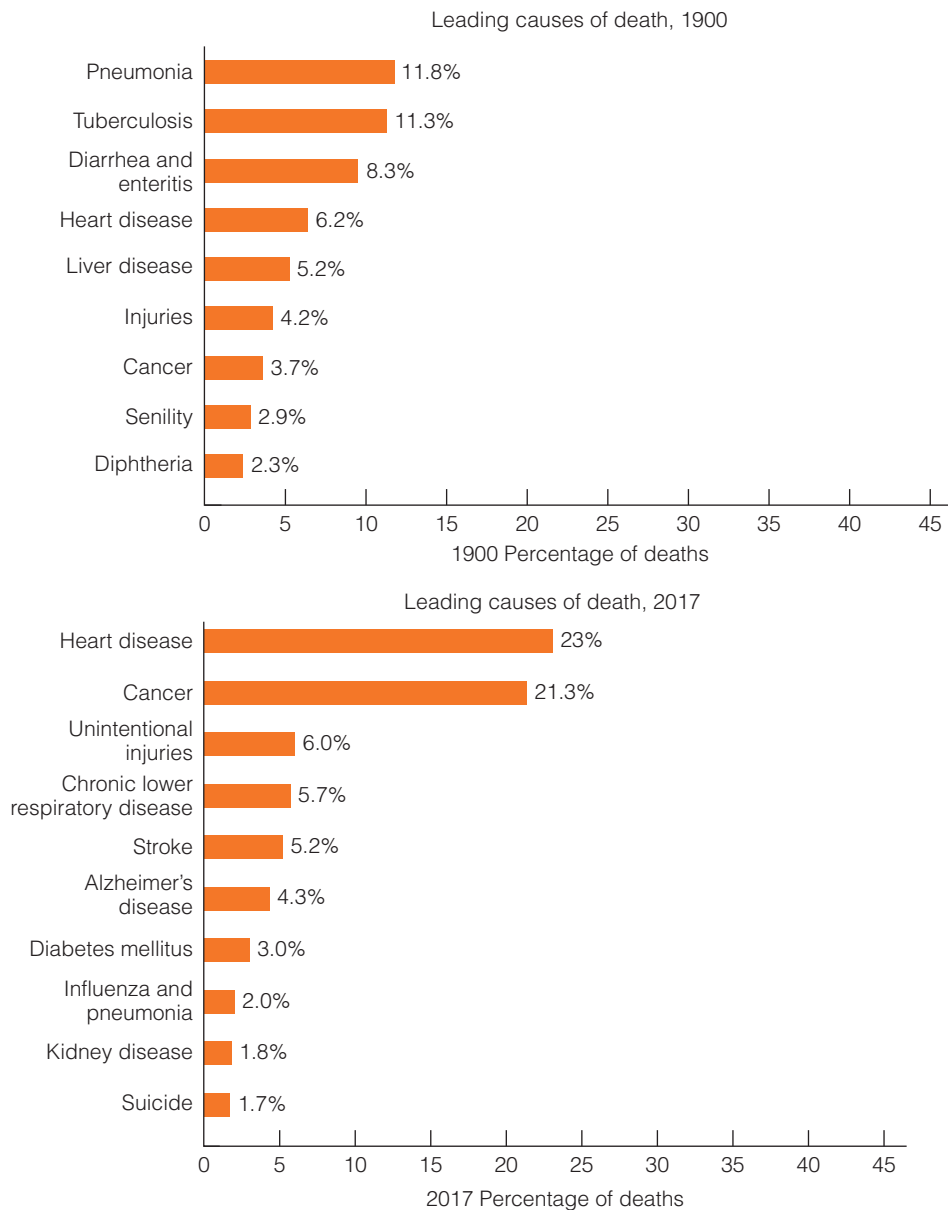


FIGURE 1.1 Leading causes of death, United States, 1900 and 2013.

Source: *Healthy people, 2010, 2000*, by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; "Deaths: Final Data for 2017," 2019, by Heron, M., *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 68(6), Table C.

of industrialized nations is vastly better than it was a century ago. Vaccines and treatments exist for many infectious diseases. However, improvements in the prevention and treatment of infectious diseases allowed for a different class of disease to emerge as today's killers: **chronic diseases**. Heart disease, cancer, and stroke—all chronic diseases—are now the leading causes of mortality in the

United States and account for a greater proportion of deaths than infectious diseases ever did. Chronic diseases develop and then persist or recur, affecting people over long periods of time. Every year, over 2 million people in the United States die from chronic diseases, but over 130 million people—almost one out of every two adults—live with at least one chronic disease.

Furthermore, most deaths today are attributable to diseases associated with lifestyle and behavior. Heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic lower respiratory diseases (including emphysema and chronic bronchitis), unintentional injuries, and diabetes are all due in part to cigarette smoking, alcohol abuse, unhealthy eating, stress, and a sedentary lifestyle. Because today's major killers arise in part due to lifestyle and behavior, people have a great deal more control over their health than they did in the past. However, many people do not exercise this control, so unhealthy behavior is an important public health problem. Indeed, unhealthy behavior contributes to the escalating costs of health care.

In this chapter, we describe the changing patterns of disease and disability and the increasing costs of health care. We also discuss how these trends change the very definition of health and require a broader view of health than in the past. This broad view of health is the biopsychosocial model, a view adopted by health psychologists.

Patterns of Disease and Death

The 20th century brought about major changes in the patterns of disease and death in the United States, including a shift in the leading causes of death. Infectious diseases were the leading causes of death in 1900, but over the next several decades, chronic diseases—such as heart disease, cancer, and stroke—became the leading killers. Only with the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020 has an infectious disease been a leading cause of death in this century. In 2020, COVID-19 was the third most common cause of death in the United States, after heart disease and cancer. When the COVID-19 pandemic subsides, chronic diseases will remain as the leading causes of mortality in the United States.

During the first few years of the 21st century, deaths from some chronic diseases—those related to unhealthy lifestyles and behaviors—began to *decrease*. These include heart disease, cancer, and stroke, which all were responsible for a smaller proportion of deaths in 2010 than in 1990. Why have deaths from these diseases decreased in the last few decades? We will discuss this in greater detail in Chapter 9, but one major reason is that fewer people in the United States now smoke cigarettes than in the past. This change in behavior contributed to some of the decline in deaths due to heart disease; improvements in health care also contributed to this decline.

Death rates due to unintentional injuries, suicide, and homicide have increased in recent years. Significant increases also occurred in Alzheimer's disease,

kidney disease, septicemia (blood infection), liver disease, hypertension, and Parkinson's disease. For many of these recently increasing causes, behavior is a less important component than for those causes that have decreased. However, the rising death rates due to Alzheimer's and Parkinson's reflect another important trend in health and health care: an increasingly older population.

Age Obviously, older people are more likely to die than younger ones, but the causes of death vary among age groups. Thus, the ranking of causes of death for the entire population may not reflect any specific age group and may lead people to misperceive the risk for some ages. For example, cardiovascular disease (which includes heart disease and stroke) and cancer account for over 50% of all deaths in the United States, but they are not the leading cause of death for young people. For individuals between 1 and 24 years of age, unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death, and violent deaths from suicide and homicide rank high on the list as well (National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS], 2018). Taken together, injuries, suicides, and homicide account for over half of deaths during these younger years. As **Figure 1.2** reveals, other causes of death account for much smaller percentages of deaths among adolescents and young adults than unintentional injuries, homicide, and suicide.

For adults 45 and older, the picture is quite different. Cardiovascular disease and cancer become the leading causes of death, accounting for nearly half of deaths. As people age, they become more likely to die, so the causes of death for older people dominate the overall figures. However, younger people show very different patterns of mortality.

Ethnicity, Income, and Disease Question 2 from the quiz inside the front cover asks if the United States is among the top 10 nations in the world in terms of life expectancy. It is not even close. It ranks 34th among all nations (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018c). Within the United States, ethnicity is also a factor in life expectancy, and the leading causes of death also vary among ethnic groups. **Table 1.1** shows the ranking of the leading causes of death for four ethnic groups in the United States. No two groups have identical profiles of causes, and some causes do not appear on the list for each group, highlighting the influence of ethnicity on mortality.

If African Americans and European Americans in the United States were considered to be different nations, European America would rank higher in life

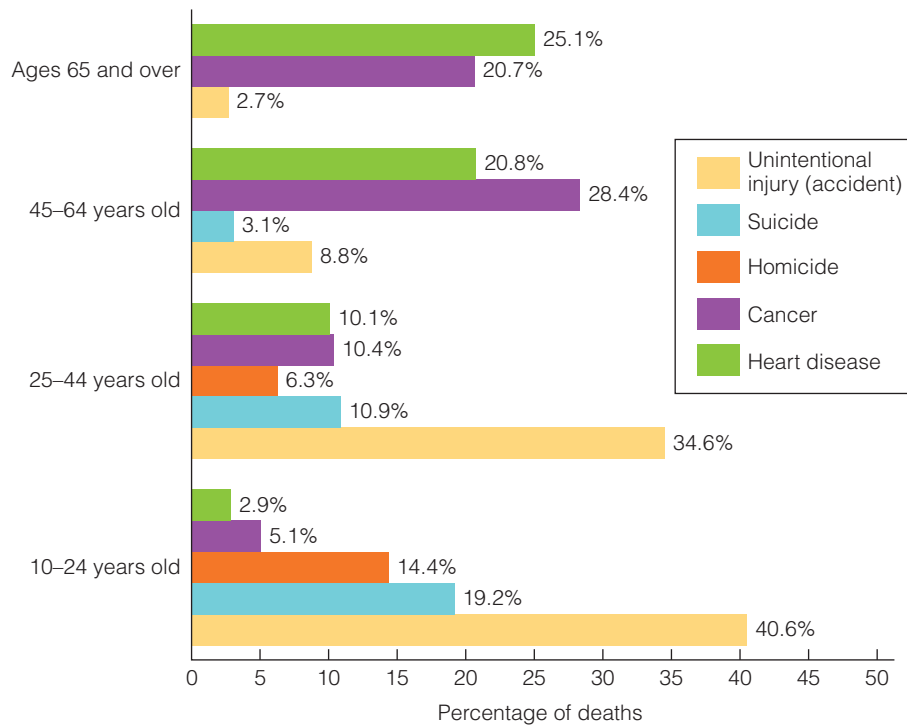


FIGURE 1.2 Leading causes of death among individuals aged 10–24, 25–44, 45–64, and 65+, United States, 2017.

Source: “Deaths: Final Data for 2017,” 2019, by Heron, M., *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 68(6), Figure 2.

TABLE 1.1 Leading Causes of Death for Four Ethnic Groups in the United States, 2017

	European Americans	Hispanic Americans	African Americans	Asian Americans
Heart disease	1	2	1	2
Cancer	2	1	2	1
Chronic lower respiratory disease	3	8	6	8
Unintentional injuries	4	3	3	4
Stroke	5	4	4	3
Alzheimer’s disease	6	6	9	6
Diabetes	7	5	5	5
Pneumonia & influenza	8	11	12	7
Suicide	9	9	16	11
Kidney disease	10	10	8	9
Chronic liver disease	11	7	14	14
Septicemia	12	13	10	12
Hypertension	14	14	11	10
Homicide	20	12	7	18

Source: “Deaths: Leading Causes for 2017,” 2019, by M. Heron, *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 68(6), Table D.

expectancy than African America—38th place and 80th place, respectively (NCHS, 2021; WHO, 2018c). Thus, European Americans have a longer life expectancy than African Americans, but neither should expect to live as long as people in Japan, Canada, Iceland, Australia, the United Kingdom, Italy, France, Hong Kong, Israel, and many other countries.

Hispanics have socioeconomic disadvantages like those of African Americans (U.S. Census Bureau [USCB], 2011), including poverty and low educational level. About 10% of European Americans live below the poverty level, whereas 32% of African Americans and 26% of Hispanic Americans do (USCB, 2011). European Americans also have educational advantages: 86% receive high school diplomas, compared with only 81% of African Americans and 59% of Hispanic Americans. These socioeconomic disadvantages translate into health disadvantages (Crimmins et al., 2007; Smith & Bradshaw, 2006). That is, poverty and low educational level both relate to health problems and lower life expectancies. Thus, some of the ethnic differences in health are due to socioeconomic differences.

Access to health insurance and medical care is not the only factor that makes poverty a health risk. Indeed, the health risks associated with poverty begin before birth. Even with the expansion of prenatal care by Medicaid, poor mothers, especially teen mothers, are more likely to deliver low-birth-weight babies, who are more likely than normal-birth-weight infants to die (NCHS, 2021). Also, pregnant women living below the poverty line are more likely than other pregnant women to be physically abused and to deliver babies who suffer the consequences of prenatal child abuse (Zelenko et al., 2000).

The association between income level and health is so strong that it appears not only at the poverty level but also at higher income levels. That is, very wealthy people have better health than people who are just, well, wealthy. Why should very wealthy people be healthier than other wealthy people? One possibility comes from the relation of income to educational level, which, in turn, relates to occupation, social class, and ethnicity. The higher the educational level, the less likely people are to engage in unhealthy behaviors such as smoking, eating high-fat foods, and maintaining a sedentary lifestyle (see *Would You Believe . . . ?* box). Another possibility is the perception of social status. People's perception of their social standing may differ from their status as indexed by educational, occupational, and income level; remarkably, this perception relates to health status more strongly than objective measures (Operario, Adler, & Williams, 2004). Thus, the relationships between health and ethnicity are intertwined with the relationships between health, income, education, and social class.

Changes in Life Expectancy During the 20th century, life expectancy rose dramatically in the United States and other industrialized nations. In 1900, life expectancy was 47.3 years, whereas today it is almost 78 years (NCHS, 2021). In other words, infants born today can expect, on average, to live more than a generation longer than their great-great-grandparents born at the beginning of the 20th century.

What accounts for the 30-year increase in life expectancy during the 20th century? Question 3 from the quiz inside the front cover asks if advances in medical care

Would You BELIEVE...?

College Is Good for Your Health

Would you believe that attending college could be good for your health? You may find that difficult to believe, as college seems to add stress, exposure to alcohol or drugs, and demands that make it difficult to maintain a healthy diet, exercise, and sleep. How could going to college possibly be healthy?

The health benefits of college appear after graduation. People who

have been to college have lower death rates than those who have not. This advantage applies to both women and men and to infectious diseases, chronic diseases, and unintentional injuries (NCHS, 2015). Better-educated people report fewer daily symptoms and less stress than less educated people (Grzywacz et al., 2004).

Even a high school education provides health benefits; but going

to college offers much more protection. For example, people with less than a high school education die at a rate of 575 per 100,000; those with a high school degree die at a rate of 509 per 100,000; but people who attend college have a death rate of only 214 per 100,000 (Miniño et al., 2011). The benefits of education for health and longevity apply to people around the world. For example,

a study of older people in Japan (Fujino et al., 2005) found that low educational level increased the risk of dying. A large-scale study of the Dutch population (Hoeymans, van Lindert, & Westert, 2005) also found that education was related to a wide range of health measures and health-related behaviors.

What factors contribute to this health advantage for people with more education? Part of that advantage may be intelligence, which predicts both health and longevity (Gottfredson & Deary, 2004). In addition, people who are well educated tend to live with and around people

with similar education, providing an environment with good health-related knowledge and attitudes (Øystein, 2008). Income and occupation may also contribute (Batty et al., 2008); people who attend college, especially those who graduate, have better jobs and higher average incomes than those who do not and thus are more likely to have better access to health care. In addition, educated people are more likely to be informed consumers of health care, gathering information on their diseases and potential treatments. Education is also associated with a variety of habits that contribute to

good health and long life. For example, people with a college education are less likely than others to smoke or use illicit drugs (Johnston et al., 2007), and they are more likely to eat a low-fat diet and to exercise.

Thus, people who attend college acquire many resources that are reflected in their lower death rate— income potential, health knowledge, more health-conscious spouses and friends, attitudes about the importance of health, and positive health habits. This strong link between education and health is one clear example of how good health is more than simply a matter of biology.

were responsible for this increase. The answer is “False”; other factors have been more important than medical care of sick people. The single most important contributor to the increase in life expectancy is the lowering of infant mortality. When infants die before their first

birthday, these deaths lower the population’s average life expectancy much more than do the deaths of middle-aged or older people. As [Figure 1.3](#) shows, infant death rates declined dramatically between 1900 and 1990, but little decrease has occurred since that time.

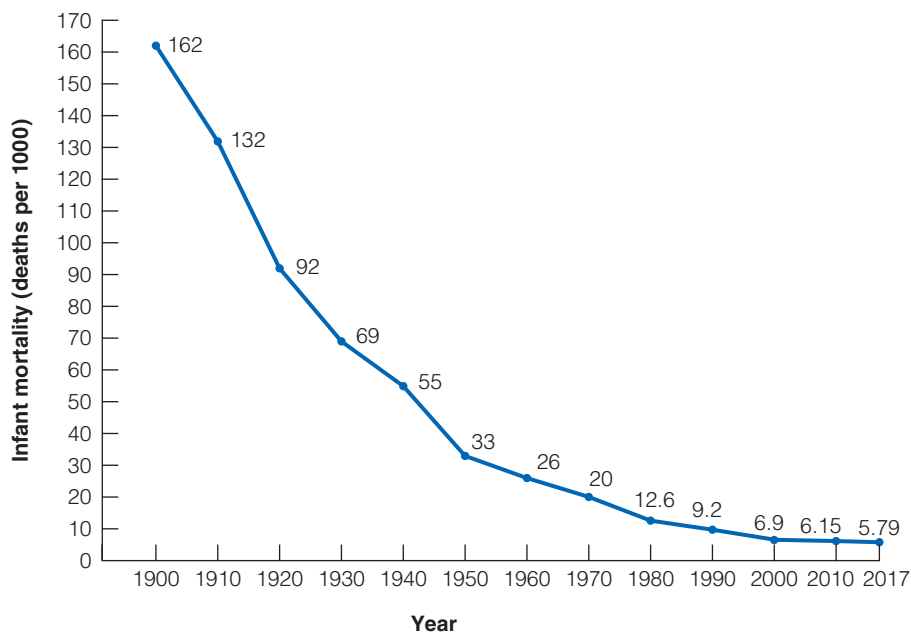


FIGURE 1.3 Decline in infant mortality in the United States, 1900–2013.

Source: Data from *Historical statistics of the United States: Colonial times to 1970*, 1975 by U.S. Bureau of the Census, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, p. 60; “Deaths: Final Data for 2013,” 2016, by Xu, J., Murphy, S. L., Kochanek, K. D., & Bastian, B. A., *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 64(2), Table B; “Recent Declines in Infant Mortality in the United States, 2005–2011,” National Center for Health Statistics, Number 120, 2013.

The prevention of disease also contributes to the recent increase in life expectancy. Widespread vaccination and safer drinking water and milk supplies all reduce infectious disease, which increases life expectancy. A healthier lifestyle also contributes to increased life expectancy, as does more efficient disposal of sewage and better nutrition. In contrast, advances in medical care—such as antibiotics and new surgical technology, efficient paramedic teams, and more skilled intensive care personnel—play a surprisingly minor role in increasing adults' life expectancy.

Escalating Cost of Medical Care

The second major change within the field of health is the escalating cost of medical care. In the United States, medical costs have increased at a much faster rate than inflation, and currently the United States spends the most of all countries on health care. Between 1960 and 2008, medical costs in the United States represented an increasingly larger proportion of the gross domestic product (GDP). Since 1995, the increases have slowed, but medical care costs as a percentage of the GDP are over 16% (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2019). Considered on a per person basis, the total yearly cost of health care in the United States increased from \$1,067 per person in 1970 to \$9,105 in 2017 (NCHS, 2019), which is a jump of more than 850%!

These costs, of course, have some relationship to increased life expectancy: As people live to middle and old age, they tend to develop chronic diseases that require extended (and often expensive) medical treatment. Nearly half of people in the United States have a chronic

condition, and they account for 86% of the dollars spent on health care (Gerteis et al., 2014). People with chronic conditions account for 88% of prescriptions written, 72% of physician visits, and 76% of hospital stays. Even though today's aging population is experiencing better health than past generations, their increasing numbers will continue to increase medical costs.

One strategy for curbing mounting medical costs is to limit services, but another approach requires a greater emphasis on the early detection of disease, changes to a healthier lifestyle, and behaviors that help prevent disease. For example, early detection of high blood pressure, high serum cholesterol, and other precursors of heart disease allow these conditions to be controlled, thereby decreasing the risk of serious disease or death. Screening people for risks is preferable to remedial treatment because chronic diseases are quite difficult to cure and living with chronic disease decreases quality of life. Avoiding disease by adopting a healthy lifestyle is even more preferable to treating diseases or screening for risks. Staying healthy is typically less costly than becoming sick and then getting well. Thus, preventing diseases through a healthy lifestyle, detecting symptoms early, and reducing health risks are all part of a changing philosophy within the health care field. As you will learn in this book, health psychologists contribute to each of these aims.

What Is Health?

“Once again, the patient as a human being with worries, fears, hopes, and despairs, as an indivisible whole and not merely the bearer of organs—of a diseased liver or



kai13/Getty Images

Technology in medicine is one reason for escalating medical costs.

stomach—is becoming the legitimate object of medical interest,” says Franz Alexander (1950, p. 17), one of the founders of the field of psychosomatic medicine.

What does it mean to be “healthy”? Question 1 from the quiz at the beginning of the book asks if health is merely the absence of disease. But is health more complex? Is health the presence of some positive condition rather than merely the absence of a negative one? Is health simply a state of the physical body, or should health also consider one’s beliefs, environment, and behaviors as well?

The **biomedical model**, which defines health as the absence of disease, has been the traditional view of Western medicine (Papas, Belar, & Rozensky, 2004). This view conceptualizes disease solely as a biological process that is a result of exposure to a specific **pathogen**, a disease-causing organism. This view spurred the development of drugs and medical technology oriented toward removing the pathogens and curing disease. The focus is on disease, which is traceable to a specific agent. Removing the pathogen restores health.

The biomedical model of disease is compatible with infectious diseases that were the leading causes of death 100 years ago. Throughout the 20th century, adherence to the biomedical model allowed medicine to conquer or control many of the diseases that once ravaged humanity. However, when chronic illnesses began to replace infectious diseases as the leading causes of death, the biomedical model became insufficient (Stone, 1987).

An alternative model of health exists now, one that advocates a more comprehensive approach to medicine. This alternative model is the **biopsychosocial model**, which includes biological, psychological, and social influences. This model holds that many diseases result from a combination of factors such as genetics, physiology, social support, personal control, stress, compliance, personality, poverty, ethnic background, and cultural beliefs. We discuss each of these factors in subsequent chapters. For now, it is important to recognize that the

biopsychosocial model has at least two advantages over the older biomedical model. First, it incorporates not only biological conditions but also psychological and social factors. Second, it views health as a positive condition. The biopsychosocial model can also account for some surprising findings about who gets sick and who stays healthy (see the Would You Believe . . . ? box). Thus, the biopsychosocial model has not only all the power of the older biomedical model but also the ability to address problems that the biomedical model has failed to solve.

According to the biopsychosocial view, health is much more than the absence of disease. A person who has no disease condition is not sick; but this person may not be healthy either. A person may have unhealthy lifestyle habits or poor social support, cope poorly with high amounts of stress, or avoid medical care when it is warranted; all of these factors increase the risk of future disease. Because health is multidimensional, all aspects of living—biological, psychological, and social—must be considered. This view diverges from the traditional Western conceptualization, but as **Table 1.2** shows, other cultures have held different views.

Consistent with this broader view, the World Health Organization (WHO) wrote into the preamble of its constitution a modern, Western definition: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This definition clearly affirms that health is a positive state and not just the absence of pathogens. Feeling good is different from not feeling bad, and research in neuroscience has confirmed the difference (Zautra, 2003). The human brain responds in distinctly different patterns to positive feelings and negative feelings. Furthermore, this broader definition of health can account for the importance of preventive behavior in physical health. For example, a healthy person is not merely somebody without a disease or a disability but also somebody who behaves in a way that is likely to maintain that state in the future.

Would You BELIEVE...?

It Takes More Than a Virus to Give You a Cold

One of the dirtiest jobs that an aspiring health psychologist could have is as a research assistant in Sheldon Cohen’s laboratory at Carnegie Mellon University. Cohen’s assistants sift through study participants’ trash in

search of used, mucous-filled tissues. When such tissues are found, the assistants unfold them, locate the gooey treasures within, and painstakingly weigh their discoveries. These assistants have good reason

to rummage for snot—they want an objective measure of how severely their participants caught the common cold.

Sheldon Cohen and his research team investigate the psychological

and social factors that predict the likelihood that a person will succumb to infection. Healthy participants in Cohen's studies receive a virus through a nasal squirt and are then quarantined in a "cold research laboratory"—actually, a hotel room—for one week. Participants also answer several questionnaires about psychological and social factors such as recent stress, typical positive and negative emotions, and the size and quality of their social networks. Cohen and his team use these questionnaires to predict who gets the cold and who remains healthy.

Cohen's findings expose the inadequacy of the biomedical approach to understanding infection. Even though everybody in his studies gets exposed to the same pathogen in exactly the same manner, only some participants get sick. Importantly, the people who resist infection share similar psychological and social characteristics. Compared with people who get sick, those who remain healthy are less likely to have dealt with recent stressful experiences (Cohen, Tyrrell, & Smith, 1991), have better sleep habits (Cohen et al., 2009), typically experience more positive emotion (Cohen et al., 2006), are more sociable (Cohen et al., 2003), and have more diverse social networks (Cohen et al., 1997).

Thus, it takes more than just exposure to a virus to succumb to a cold or flu bug; exposure to the pathogen interacts with psychological and social factors to produce illness. Only the biopsychosocial model can account for these influences.

TABLE 1.2 Definitions of Health Held by Various Cultures

Culture	Time Period	Health Is . . .
Prehistoric	10,000 BCE	Endangered by spirits that enter the body from outside
Babylonians and Assyrians	1800–700 BCE	Endangered by the gods, who send disease as a punishment
Ancient Hebrews	1000–300 BCE	A gift from God; disease is a punishment from God
Ancient Greeks	500 BCE	A holistic unity of body and spirit
Ancient China	Between 800 and 200 BCE	A state of physical and spiritual harmony with nature
Native Americans	1000 BCE–present	Total harmony with nature and the ability to survive under difficult conditions
Galen in ancient Rome	130–200 CE	The absence of pathogens, such as bad air or body fluids, that cause disease
Early Christians	300–600 CE	Not as important as disease, which is a sign that one is chosen by God
Descartes in France	1596–1650	A condition of the mechanical body, which is separate from the mind
Western Africans	1600–1800	Harmony achieved through interactions with other people and objects in the world
Virchow in Germany	Late 1800s	Endangered by microscopic organisms that invade cells, producing disease
Freud in Austria	Late 1800s	Influenced by emotions and the mind
World Health Organization	1946	"A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being"

IN SUMMARY

In the past century, four major trends changed the field of health care. One trend is the changing pattern of disease and death in industrialized nations, including the United States. Chronic diseases now replace infectious

diseases as the leading causes of death and disability. These chronic diseases include heart disease, stroke, cancer, emphysema, and adult-onset diabetes, all of which have causes that include individual behavior.

The increase in chronic disease contributed to a second trend: the escalating cost of medical care.

Costs for medical care steadily increased from 1970 to 2013. Much of this cost increase is due to a growing elderly population, innovative but expensive medical technology, and inflation.

A third trend is the changing definition of health. Many people continue to view health as the absence of disease, but a growing number of health care professionals view health as a state of positive well-being. To accept this definition of health, one must reconsider the biomedical model that has dominated the health care field.

The fourth trend, the emergence of the biopsychosocial model of health, relates to the changing definition of health. Rather than define “disease” as simply the presence of pathogens, the biopsychosocial model emphasizes positive health and sees disease, particularly chronic disease, as resulting from the interaction of biological, psychological, and social conditions.

APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

1. Consider an illness that you have learned about from the media or your own personal experiences. What is the biological basis of the illness? What are some of the behaviors, beliefs, and aspects of a person’s social and cultural environment that you believe contribute to risk for the illness? Does the biopsychosocial model help broaden your understanding of the condition, compared to the biomedical model?

1-2 Psychology’s Relevance for Health

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1-4 Trace the expanding role of psychology in understanding physical health, from its roots in psychosomatic medicine and behavioral medicine to its current role in the field of health psychology

Although chronic diseases have biological causes, individual behaviors and lifestyle also contribute to their development. Because behavior is so important for chronic disease, psychology—the science of behavior—is now more relevant to health care than ever before.

It took many years, however, for psychology to gain acceptance by the medical field. In 1911, the American Psychological Association (APA) recommended that psychology be part of the medical school curriculum, but most medical schools did not follow this recommendation. During the 1940s, the medical specialty of psychiatry incorporated the study of psychological factors related to disease into its training, but only a few psychologists were involved in health research (Matarazzo, 1994). During the 1960s, psychology’s role in medicine began to expand with the creation of new medical schools; the number of psychologists who held academic appointments on medical school faculties nearly tripled from 1969 to 1993 (Matarazzo, 1994).

In the past several decades, psychologists have gained greater acceptance by the medical profession (Pingitore et al., 2001). In 2002, the American Medical Association (AMA) accepted several new categories for health and behavior that permit psychologists to bill for services to patients with physical diseases. Also, Medicare’s Graduate Medical Education program now accepts psychology internships, and the APA worked with the WHO to formulate a diagnostic system for biopsychosocial disorders, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health (Reed & Scheldeman, 2004). Thus, the role of psychologists in medical settings has expanded beyond traditional mental health problems to include programs to help people stop smoking, eat a healthy diet, exercise, adhere to medical advice, reduce stress, control pain, live with chronic disease, and avoid unintentional injuries.

The Contribution of Psychosomatic Medicine

The biopsychosocial model recognizes that psychological and emotional factors contribute to physical health problems. This notion is not new, as Socrates and Hippocrates proposed similar ideas centuries ago. Furthermore, Sigmund Freud also proposed that unconscious psychological factors could contribute to physical symptoms, but Freud’s approach was not based on systematic scientific research.

In 1932, Walter Cannon observed that emotions are accompanied by physiological changes, a discovery that started a search to tie emotional causes to illness (Kimball, 1981). Cannon’s research demonstrated that emotions could cause physiological changes capable of causing disease. From this finding, Helen Flanders Dunbar (1943) developed the notion that habitual



Will & Dani McIntyre/Science Source

The role of the psychologist in health care settings has expanded beyond traditional mental health problems to include procedures such as biofeedback.

responses, which people exhibit as part of their personalities, could relate to specific diseases. In other words, Dunbar hypothesized a relationship between personality type and disease. A little later, Franz Alexander (1950), a onetime follower of Freud, began to see emotional conflicts as a precursor to certain diseases.

These views led others to see a range of specific illnesses as “psychosomatic.” These illnesses included such disorders as peptic ulcer, rheumatoid arthritis, hypertension, asthma, hyperthyroidism, and ulcerative colitis. However, the widespread belief at the time in the separation of mind and body—a belief that originated with Descartes (Papas et al., 2004)—led many laypeople to regard these psychosomatic disorders as not being “real,” but rather “all in the head.” Thus, psychosomatic medicine exerted a mixed impact on the acceptance of psychology within medicine; it benefited by connecting emotional and physical conditions, but it may have harmed by belittling the psychological components of illness. Psychosomatic medicine, however, laid the foundation for the transition to the biopsychosocial model of health and disease (Novack et al., 2007).

The Emergence of Behavioral Medicine

From the psychosomatic medicine movement, two interrelated disciplines emerged: *behavioral medicine* and *health psychology*.

Behavioral medicine is “the interdisciplinary field concerned with the development and integration of behavioral and biomedical science knowledge and techniques relevant to health and illness and the application of this knowledge and these techniques to prevention, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation” (Schwartz & Weiss, 1978, p. 250). A key component of this definition is the integration of biomedical science with behavioral sciences, especially psychology. The goals of behavioral medicine are like those in other areas of health care: improved prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. Behavioral medicine, however, attempts to use psychology and the behavioral sciences in conjunction with medicine to achieve these goals. Chapters 3 through 11 cover topics in behavioral medicine.

The Emergence of Health Psychology

At about the same time that behavioral medicine appeared, a task force of the American Psychological Association revealed that few psychologists conducted health research (APA Task Force, 1976). The report envisioned a future in which psychologists would contribute to the enhancement of health and prevention of disease.

In 1978, with the establishment of Division 38 of the American Psychological Association, the field of health psychology officially began. **Health psychology** is the branch of psychology that considers how individual behaviors and lifestyles affect a person's physical health. Health psychology also includes psychology's contributions to the enhancement of health, the prevention and treatment of disease, the identification of health risk factors, the improvement of the health care system, and the shaping of public opinion regarding health. More specifically, it involves the application of psychological principles to physical health areas such as controlling cholesterol, managing stress, alleviating pain, stopping smoking, and moderating other risky

behaviors, as well as encouraging regular exercise, medical and dental checkups, and safer behaviors. In addition, health psychology helps identify conditions that affect health, diagnose and treat certain chronic diseases, and modify the behavioral factors involved in physiological and psychological rehabilitation. As such, health psychology interacts with both biology and sociology to produce health- and disease-related outcomes (see **Figure 1.4**). Note that neither psychology nor sociology contributes directly to outcomes; only biological factors contribute directly to physical health and disease. Thus, the psychological and sociological factors that affect health must “get under the skin” in some way to affect biological processes. One of the goals of health psychology is to identify those pathways.

With its promotion of the biopsychosocial model, the field of health psychology continues to grow. One branch of this field—that is, clinical health psychology—continues to gain recognition in providing health care as part of multidisciplinary teams. Health psychology researchers continue to build a knowledge base that will furnish information about the interconnections among psychological, social, and biological factors that relate to health.

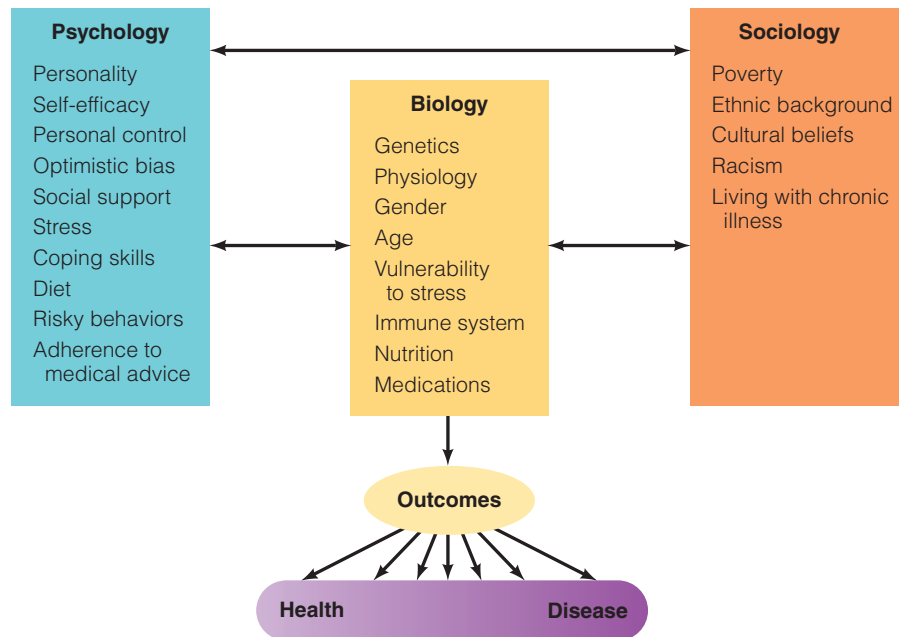


FIGURE 1.4 The biopsychosocial model: Biological, psychological, and sociological factors interact to produce health or disease.

IN SUMMARY

The involvement of psychology in health dates to the beginning of the 20th century, but at that time, few psychologists were involved in medicine. The psychosomatic medicine movement brought psychological factors into the understanding of disease, and that view gave way to the biopsychosocial approach to health and disease. By the 1970s, psychologists had begun to develop research and treatment aimed at chronic disease and health promotion; this research and treatment led to the founding of two fields: behavioral medicine and health psychology.

Behavioral medicine applies the knowledge and techniques of behavioral research to physical health, including prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. Health psychology overlaps with behavioral medicine, and the two professions have many common goals. However, behavioral medicine is an interdisciplinary field, whereas health psychology is a specialty within the discipline of psychology. Health psychology strives to enhance health, prevent and treat disease, identify risk factors, improve the health care system, and shape public opinion regarding health issues.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Select a health condition that is personally relevant and conduct an internet search of recent research or news reports about the condition. Does current research examine the role of psychological factors in the prevention or development of the condition? If so, how?

1-3 The Profession of Health Psychology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1-5** Familiarize yourself with the profession of health psychology, including how health psychologists are trained and the varied types of work that they do

Health psychology now stands as a unique field and profession. Health psychologists have their own

associations, publish their research in journals devoted to health psychology (*Health Psychology* and *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, among others), and acquire training in unique doctoral and postdoctoral programs. In addition, health psychology is recognized within medical schools, schools of public health, universities, and hospitals; health psychologists work within all these settings. However, their training occurs within psychology.

The Training of Health Psychologists

Health psychologists are psychologists first and specialists in health second, but the training in health is extensive. People who pursue research in health psychology must learn the topics, theories, and methods of health psychology research. Health psychologists who provide clinical care, known as **clinical health psychologists**, must learn clinical skills and how to practice as part of a health care team. Some health psychologists also seek out training in medical subspecialties, such as neurology, endocrinology, immunology, and epidemiology. This training may occur in a doctoral program (Baum, Perry, & Tarbell, 2004), but many health psychologists also obtain postdoctoral training, with at least two years of specialized training in health psychology to follow a PhD or PsyD in psychology (Belar, 1997; Matarazzo, 1987). Practicums and internships in health care settings in hospitals and clinics are common components of training in clinical health psychology (Nicassio, Meyerowitz, & Kerns, 2004).

The Work of Health Psychologists

Health psychologists work in a variety of settings, and their work setting varies according to their specialty. Angela Bryan is one of these health psychologists, and her work is described in this Real-World Profile. Some health psychologists, such as Angela Bryan, are primarily researchers, who work in universities or government agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health and the CDC, that conduct research. Health psychology research encompasses many topics; it may focus on behaviors related to the development of disease or on evaluation of the effectiveness of new interventions and treatments. Clinical health psychologists are often employed in hospitals, pain clinics, or community clinics. Other settings for clinical health psychologists include health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and private practice.

As Angela Bryan's work shows, health psychologists engage in a variety of activities. Much of their work



Real-World Profile of **ANGELA BRYAN**



Courtesy of Angela Bryan

Health psychology is a relatively new and fascinating field of psychology. Health psychologists examine how people's lifestyles influence their physical health. In this book, you will learn about the diverse topics, findings, and people that make up this field.

First, let's introduce you to Angela Bryan, a health psychologist from the University of Colorado Boulder. Angela develops interventions that promote healthy behavior, such as safe sex and physical activity. Angela has won several awards for her work, including recognition that one of her interventions is among the few that work in reducing risky sexual behavior among adolescents ("Safe on the Outs"; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2011b).

As an adolescent, Angela thought of herself as a "rebel" (Aiken, 2006), perhaps an unlikely start for someone who now develops ways to help people to maintain a healthy lifestyle. It was not until college that Angela discovered her passion for health psychology. She took a course in social psychology that explored how people judge others. Angela quickly saw the relevance for understanding safe sex behavior. At this time, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was peaking in the United States, and condom use was one action people could take to prevent the spread of HIV. Yet people often resisted proposing condoms to a partner due to concerns such as, "What will a partner think of me if I say that a condom is needed?" Angela sought out a professor to supervise a research project on perceptions of condom use in an initial sexual encounter.

Angela continued this work as a PhD student and developed a program to promote condom use among college women. In this program, Angela taught women skills for proposing and using condoms. This work was not always easy. She recalls, "I would walk through the residence halls on my way to deliver my intervention, with a basket of condoms in one arm and a basket of zucchinis in the other. I can't imagine what others thought I was doing!"

Later, she expanded her work to populations at greater risk for HIV, including incarcerated adolescents, intravenous drug users, HIV+ individuals, and truck drivers in India. She also developed an interest in promoting physical activity.

In all her work, Angela uses the biopsychosocial model, which you will learn about in this chapter. Specifically, she identifies the biological, psychological, and social factors that influence health behaviors such as condom use. Angela's interventions address each of these factors.

Angela's work is both challenging and rewarding; she works daily with community agencies, clinical psychologists, neuroscientists, and exercise physiologists. She uses solid research methods to evaluate the success of her interventions. More recently, she has started to examine the genetic factors that determine whether a person will respond to a physical activity intervention.

Although she views many aspects of her work as rewarding, one aspect is especially worthwhile: "When the interventions work!" she says. "If we can get one kid to use a condom or one person with a chronic illness to exercise, that is meaningful."

In this book, you will learn about the theories, methods, and discoveries of health psychologists such as Angela Bryan. As you read, keep in mind this piece of advice from Angela: "Think broadly and optimistically about health. A health psychologist's work is difficult, but it can make a difference."

is collaborative in nature; health psychologists engaged in either research or practice may work with a team of health professionals, including physicians, nurses, physical therapists, and counselors.

The services provided by health psychologists working in clinics and hospitals fit into several categories. One type of service offers alternatives to pharmacological treatment; for example, biofeedback might be an alternative to painkillers for headache patients. Another type of service is providing behavioral interventions to treat physical disorders such as chronic pain and some gastrointestinal problems or to improve the rate of patient compliance with medical regimens. Other clinical health psychologists may provide assessments using psychological and neuropsychological tests or provide psychological treatment for patients coping with disease. Those who concentrate on prevention and behavior changes are more likely to be employed in HMOs, school-based prevention programs, or worksite wellness programs.

Like Angela Bryan, many health psychologists engage in both teaching and research. Those who work exclusively in service-delivery settings are much less likely to teach and do research and are more likely to spend time providing diagnoses and interventions for people with health problems. Some health psychology students go into allied health profession fields, such as social work, occupational therapy, dietetics, or public health. Those who go into public health often work in academic settings or government agencies and may monitor trends in health issues or develop and evaluate educational interventions and health awareness campaigns. Health psychologists also contribute to the development and evaluation of widescale public health decisions, including taxes and warning labels placed upon healthy products such as cigarettes, and the inclusion of nutrition information on food products and

menus. Thus, the health psychologists contribute to the promotion of health in a wide variety of manners.

IN SUMMARY

To maximize their contributions to health care, health psychologists must be both broadly trained in the science of psychology and specifically trained in the knowledge and skills of areas such as neurology, endocrinology, immunology, epidemiology, and other medical subspecialties. Health psychologists work in a variety of settings, including universities, hospitals, clinics, private practice, and HMOs. They typically collaborate with other health care professionals in providing services for physical disorders rather than for traditional areas of mental health care. Research in health psychology is also likely to be a collaborative effort that may include the professions of medicine, epidemiology, nursing, pharmacology, nutrition, and exercise physiology.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. The Society for Health Psychology is the division of the American Psychological Association (APA) that represents the field of health psychology. Their website (societyforhealthpsychology.org) is an excellent resource and includes short profiles of health psychologists who have made outstanding contributions to the field. Read through some of these profiles and answer these questions: (1) Where did they get their training, and do they work in a university or hospital? (2) What health issues do they focus on and what are some of their major discoveries? (3) How do you see their work utilizing the biopsychosocial model of health?

Questions

This chapter has addressed three basic questions:

1. How have views of health changed?

Views of health are changing, both among health care professionals and among the general public. Several trends have prompted these changes, including (1) the changing pattern of disease and death in the United States from infectious diseases

to chronic diseases, (2) the increase in medical costs, (3) the growing acceptance of a view of health that includes not only the absence of disease but also the presence of positive well-being, and (4) the biopsychosocial model of health that departs from the traditional biomedical and psychosomatic models by including not only biochemical abnormalities but also psychological and social conditions.

2. How did psychology become involved in health care?

Psychology has been involved in health almost from the beginning of the 20th century. During those early years, however, only a few psychologists worked in medical settings, and most were not considered full partners with physicians. Psychosomatic medicine highlighted psychological explanations of certain somatic diseases, emphasizing the role of emotions in the development of disease. By the early 1970s, psychology and other behavioral sciences began to play a role in the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases and in the promotion of positive health, giving rise to two new fields: behavioral medicine and health psychology.

Behavioral medicine is an interdisciplinary field concerned with applying the knowledge and techniques of behavioral science to the maintenance of physical health and to prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation. Behavioral medicine, which is not a branch of psychology, overlaps with health psychology, a division within the field of psychology. Health psychology uses the science of psychology to enhance health, prevent and treat disease, identify risk factors, improve the health care system, and shape public opinion regarding health.

3. What type of training do health psychologists receive, and what kinds of work do they do?

Health psychologists receive doctoral-level training in psychology and often receive at least two years of postdoctoral work in a specialized area of health psychology.

Health psychologists are employed in a variety of settings, including universities, hospitals, clinics, private practice, and health maintenance

organizations. Clinical health psychologists provide services, often as part of a health care team. Health psychologists who are researchers typically collaborate with others, sometimes as part of a multidisciplinary team, to conduct research on behaviors related to the development of disease or to evaluate the effectiveness of new treatments.

Suggested Readings

- Baum, A., Perry, N. W., Jr., & Tarbell, S. (2004). The development of psychology as a health science. In R. G. Frank, A. Baum, & J. L. Wallander (Eds.), *Handbook of clinical health psychology* (Vol. 3, pp. 9–28). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. This recent review of the development of health psychology describes the background and current status of the field of health psychology.
- Belar, C. D. (2008). Clinical health psychology: A health care specialty in professional psychology. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 39, 229–233. Clinical health psychology is the applied branch of health psychology. Cynthia Belar traces the development of this field from the beginning, pointing out the widespread influence of health psychology on research and practice in clinical psychology.
- Leventhal, H., Weinman, J., Leventhal, E. A., & Phillips, L. A. (2008). Health psychology: The search for pathways between behavior and health. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59, 477–505. This article details how psychological theory and research can improve the effectiveness of interventions for managing chronic illness.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2-1 Understand the placebo effect and how it demonstrates a role of psychological beliefs in health | 2-5 Identify the strengths and limitations of observational methods, randomized controlled trials, and meta-analyses |
| 2-2 Contrast single-blind and double-blind research designs in their ability to control for placebo effects | 2-6 Understand the difference between absolute risk and relative risk |
| 2-3 Identify the strengths and limitations of correlational, cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental, and ex post facto research designs | 2-7 Identify the seven criteria that can help researchers infer a causal relationship from non-experimental studies |
| 2-4 Understand the difference between disease prevalence and disease incidence | 2-8 Recognize the important role of theory in guiding health research |
| | 2-9 Understand how reliability and validity improve measurement in health research |

CHAPTER 2

Conducting Health Research

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Sylvester Colligan

The Placebo in Treatment and Research

- Treatment and the Placebo
- Research and the Placebo

Research Methods in Psychology

- Correlational Studies
- Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Studies
- Experimental Designs
- Ex Post Facto Designs

Research Methods in Epidemiology

- Observational Methods
- Randomized Controlled Trials
- Meta-Analysis
- An Example of Epidemiological Research: The Alameda County Study

Determining Causation

- The Risk Factor Approach
- Cigarettes and Disease: Is There a Causal Relationship?

Research Tools

- The Role of Theory in Research
- The Role of Psychometrics in Research

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on five basic questions:

1. What are placebos, and how do they affect research and treatment?
2. How does psychology research contribute to health knowledge?
3. How has epidemiology contributed to health knowledge?
4. How can scientists determine if a behavior causes a disease?
5. How do theory and measurement contribute to health psychology?

Why did Sylvester Colligan get better? Was Moseley negligent in performing a fake surgery on Colligan? Surprisingly, many people do not view Moseley's treatment as negligent. Moseley and his colleagues (2002) were conducting a study of the effectiveness of arthroscopic knee surgery. This type of procedure is widely performed, but it is very expensive, and Moseley had doubts about its effectiveness (Talbot, 2000). So Moseley decided to perform an experimental study that included a placebo as well as a real arthroscopic surgery. A **placebo** is an inactive substance or condition that has the appearance of an active treatment and that may cause participants to improve or change because of their belief in the placebo's efficacy.

Moseley suspected that this type of belief, and not the surgery, was producing improvements, so he designed a study in which half of the participants received sham—that is, *fake*—knee surgery. Participants in this condition received anesthesia and surgical lesions to the knee, but no further treatment. The other half of the participants received standard arthroscopic knee surgery. The participants agreed to be in either group, knowing that they might receive sham surgery. The participants, including Colligan, did not know for several years whether they were in the placebo or the arthroscopic surgery group. Moseley discovered, contrary to widespread belief, that arthroscopic knee surgery provided no real benefits beyond a placebo effect. Those who received the sham surgery reported the same level of knee pain and functioning as those who received the real surgical treatment.

Moseley's results suggested that it was the patients' beliefs about the surgery, rather than the surgery itself, that provided such benefits. The placebo effect is a fascinating demonstration of the effect of an individual's beliefs on their physical health. However, the placebo effect presents a problem for researchers like Moseley who want to determine which effects are due to treatment and which are due to beliefs about the treatment.



Check **YOUR BELIEFS**

About Health Research

Check the items that are consistent with your beliefs.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Placebo effects can influence both physical and psychological problems. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Patients who expect a medication to relieve their pain often experience a reduction in pain, even after taking a “sugar pill.” <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Personal testimonials are a good way to determine treatment effectiveness. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Newspaper and television reports of scientific research give an accurate picture of the importance of the research. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Information from longitudinal studies is generally more | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> informative than information from the study of one person. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. All scientific methods yield equally valuable results, so the research method is not important in determining the validity of results. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. In determining important health information, studies with nonhuman subjects can be just as important as those with human participants. <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Results from experimental research are more likely than results from observational research to suggest the underlying cause for a disease. <input type="checkbox"/> 9. People outside the scientific community conduct valuable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> research, but scientists try to discount the importance of such research. <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Scientific breakthroughs happen every day. <input type="checkbox"/> 11. New reports of health research often contradict previous findings, so there is no way to use this information to make good personal decisions about health. |
|---|--|--|

Items 1, 2, 5, and 8 are consistent with sound scientific information, but each of the remaining items represents a naïve or unrealistic view of research that can make you an uninformed health research consumer. The information in this chapter will help you become more sophisticated in your evaluation of and expectations for health research.

This chapter looks at the way health psychologists conduct research, emphasizing psychology from the behavioral sciences and epidemiology from the biomedical sciences. These two disciplines share some methods for investigating health-related behaviors, but they also have their own unique contributions to scientific methodology. Before we begin examining the methods that psychologists and epidemiologists use in their research, let's consider the situation that Colligan experienced—improvement due to the placebo effect.

2-1 The Placebo in Treatment and Research

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 2-1** Understand the placebo effect and how it demonstrates a role of psychological beliefs in health
- 2-2** Contrast single-blind and double-blind research designs in their ability to control for placebo effects

As we described in Chapter 1, health psychology involves the application of psychological principles to the understanding and improvement of physical health. The placebo effect represents one of the clearest examples of the link between people's beliefs and their physical health. Like many people receiving treatment, Colligan benefited from his positive expectations; he improved, even though he received a treatment that technically should not have led to improvement.

Most physicians are aware of the placebo effect, and many may even prescribe placebos when no other effective treatments are available (Linde et al., 2018; Tilburt et al., 2008). However, strong placebo effects can pose a problem for scientists trying to evaluate if a new treatment is effective. Thus, the placebo effect may help individuals who receive treatment but complicate the job of researchers—that is, it can have treatment benefits but research drawbacks.

Treatment and the Placebo

The power of placebo effects was nothing new to Moseley, as the potency of “sugar pills” had been recognized for years. Henry Beecher (1955) observed the effects of placebos on a variety of conditions ranging from



Real-World Profile of SYLVESTER COLLIGAN

Sylvester Colligan was a 76-year-old man who had been having trouble with his right knee for five years (Talbot, 2000). His doctor diagnosed arthritis but had no treatment that would help. However, this physician told Colligan about an experimental study conducted by Dr. J. Bruce Moseley. Colligan talked to Dr. Moseley and reported: "I was very impressed with him, especially when I heard he was the team doctor with the [Houston] Rockets. . . . So, sure, I went ahead and signed up for this new thing he was doing" (Talbot, 2000, p. 36).

The treatment worked. Two years after the surgery, Colligan reported that his knee had not bothered him since the surgery: "It's just like my other knee now. I give a whole lot of credit to Dr. Moseley. Whenever I see him on the TV during a basketball game, I call the wife in and say, 'Hey, there's the doctor that fixed my knee!'" (Talbot, 2000, p. 36).

Colligan's improvement would not be so surprising, except for one thing: Dr. Moseley did not perform surgery on Colligan. Instead, Dr. Moseley gave Colligan anesthesia, made some cuts around Colligan's knee that *looked* like surgical incisions, and then sent Colligan on his way home.

headache to the common cold. Beecher concluded that the therapeutic effect of the placebo was substantial—about 35% of patients showed improvement! Hundreds of studies have since examined placebo effects. A recent review of this research confirms that placebos can lead to noticeable improvements in health outcomes, especially in the context of pain and nausea (Hróbjartsson & Gøtzsche, 2010). For example, a meta-analysis of migraine headache prevention (Macedo, Baños, & Farré, 2008) shows a placebo effect of 21%. A more recent review (Cepeda et al., 2012) reveals that anywhere from 7% to 43% of patients in pain improve after receiving a placebo, with the likelihood of improvement largely attributable to the type of pain experienced.

Placebo effects occur in many other health conditions. For example, some researchers (Fournier et al., 2010) argue that the placebo effect is responsible for much of the effectiveness of antidepressant drugs, especially among people with mild to moderate symptoms. Furthermore, the strength of the placebo effect associated with antipsychotic drugs has steadily increased over the past 50 years, suggesting that the effectiveness of these drugs may be in part due to increases in people's beliefs regarding their efficacy (Agid et al., 2013; Rutherford et al., 2014). However, some conditions, such as broken bones, do not respond to placebos (Kaptchuk, Eisenberg, & Komaroff, 2002).

The more a placebo resembles an effective treatment, the stronger the placebo effect will be. Big pills are more effective than little ones, and colored pills work better than white tablets. Capsules work better

than tablets, and placebos labeled with brand names work better than generic placebos. Two doses provoke a larger placebo response than one dose. An injection is more powerful than a pill, and surgery tends to prompt an even larger placebo response than an injection does. Even cost matters; more expensive placebo pills work better than cheaper pills (Waber et al., 2008)!

Both physician and patient expectations also strengthen placebo effects. Physicians who appear positive and hopeful about treatment prompt stronger responses in their patients (Moerman, 2003). Placebo responses also relate to the practitioner's other characteristics, such as their reputation, attention, interest, concern, and the confidence they project that a treatment will be effective (Moerman & Jonas, 2002).

Placebos can also produce adverse effects, called the **nocebo effect** (Scott et al., 2008; Turner et al., 1994). Nearly 20% of healthy volunteers given a placebo in a double-blind study experienced some negative effect because of the nocebo effect. Sometimes, these negative effects appear as side effects, which show the same symptoms as other drug side effects, such as headaches, nausea and other digestive problems, dry mouth, and sleep disturbances (Amanzio et al., 2009). When participants are led to believe that a treatment might worsen symptoms, the nocebo effect can be as strong as the placebo effect (Petersen et al., 2014). The presence of negative effects demonstrates that the placebo effect is not merely improvement; it also includes any change resulting from an inert treatment.

How and why do the placebo and nocebo effects occur? Although many people assume that



Grace Cary/Moment/Getty Images

The more a placebo resembles an effective treatment, the stronger the placebo effect. These sugar pills, which look like real pills, are likely to have strong placebo effects.

improvements due to placebos are psychological—“It’s in people’s heads”—research suggests that they have both a physical and psychological basis (Benedetti, 2006; Scott et al., 2008). For example, a placebo analgesic alters brain activity levels in ways that are consistent with the activity that occurs during pain relief from analgesic drugs (Wager et al., 2004). The nocebo response also activates specific areas of the brain and acts on neurotransmitters, giving additional support to its physical reality (Scott et al., 2008). However, placebos are likely to have unique physiological effects that differ from those attributable to a standard medical treatment. For example, in an antidepressant clinical trial (Zilcha-Mano et al., 2019), participants who believed that they received an antidepressant showed less activity in the amygdala—a brain region associated with processing threat-related emotions of fear, anxiety, and aggression—compared to those who were unsure of whether they received an antidepressant or placebo, showing that people’s expectations can have unique effects on brain activity.

Expectancy is a major component of the placebo effect (Price, Finniss & Benedetti, 2008; Stewart-Williams, 2004). People act in ways that they *think* they should. Thus, people who receive treatment without their knowledge do not benefit as much as those who know what to expect (Colloca et al., 2004). In addition, culture influences the placebo response. For example, cultures that place greater faith in medical interventions show stronger responses to placebos that resemble a medical intervention (Moerman, 2011). Learning and conditioning also factor in the placebo response. Through classical and operant conditioning, people

associate a treatment with getting better, creating situations in which receiving treatment leads to improvement. Thus, both expectancy and learning contribute to the placebo effect.

In most situations involving medical treatment, patients’ improvements may result from a combination of treatment plus the placebo effect (Finniss & Benedetti, 2005). Placebo effects are a tribute to the ability of humans to heal themselves, and practitioners can enlist this ability to help patients become healthier (Ezekiel & Miller, 2001; Walach & Jonas, 2004). Therefore, the placebo effect can be a positive factor in medical and behavioral therapies, as it was for Colligan, whose knee improved because of sham surgery. However, the placebo effect makes it difficult to separate the effect of a treatment from the effect of people’s *beliefs* about the treatment, so researchers often design studies to try to disentangle these effects, as we will describe.

Research and the Placebo

For researchers to conclude that a treatment is effective, the treatment must show a higher rate of effectiveness than a placebo. This standard calls for researchers to use at least two groups in a study: one that receives the treatment and another that receives a placebo. Both groups must have equal expectations concerning the effectiveness of the treatment. To create equal expectancy, not only must the participants be unaware of whether they are receiving a placebo or a treatment; the experimenters who dispense both conditions must also be “blind” as to which group is which. The arrangement in which neither participants nor experimenters know about treatment conditions is called a **double-blind design**. As the Would You Believe . . . ? box points out, this design strategy creates ethical dilemmas.

Psychological treatments such as counseling, hypnosis, biofeedback, relaxation training, massage, and a variety of stress and pain management techniques also produce expectancy effects. That is, the placebo effect also applies to research in psychology, but double-blind designs are not easy to perform with these treatments. Placebo pills can look the same as pills containing an active ingredient, but providers of psychological or behavioral treatments always know when they are providing a sham treatment. In these studies, researchers use a **single-blind design** in which the participants do not know if they are receiving the active or inactive treatment, but the providers are not blind to treatment conditions. In single-blind designs, the control for

expectancy is not as complete as in double-blind designs; creating equal expectancies for participants, however, is usually the more important control feature. Although health researchers often want to know whether a

particular treatment provides benefits beyond placebo effects, health researchers also investigate a variety of other questions with several other research designs, which we will describe in the next section.

Would You BELIEVE...?

Prescribing Placebos May Be Considered Ethical

Cebocap, a capsule available only by prescription, may be a wonder drug. The ingredients in Cebocap can be remarkably effective in relieving many health problems with few serious side effects. Yet, many people would be upset to learn that their doctor prescribed them with Cebocap.

Cebocap is a placebo pill made by Forest Pharmaceuticals. Why would a physician prescribe Cebocap, and could it ever be ethical to do so?

Although it is unclear how often physicians prescribe placebos such as Cebocap, many doctors already report prescribing treatments that they consider to be placebos, such as vitamins or antibiotics for a viral infection (Tilburt et al., 2008). However, nearly three-quarters of doctors who admit to prescribing a placebo describe it simply as “[m]edicine not typically used for your condition but might benefit you” (Tilburt et al., 2008, p. 3). This is truthful and preserves the active ingredient of placebos: positive expectations. However, critics of this practice argue that the physician is deceiving the patient by withholding the fact that the treatment has no inherent medical benefit.

Could a placebo still be effective if the provider fully informed the patient that the treatment was merely a placebo? One team of researchers set out to answer this question, by prescribing placebo pills to patients with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) (Kaptchuk et al., 2010). IBS is a chronic gastrointestinal disorder, characterized by recurrent abdominal pain. With few other effective treatments available for IBS, many view it as

ethically permissible to study the effects of placebos on IBS symptoms.

In one experimental condition of this study, researchers told patients to take placebo pills twice daily, describing them as “made of an inert substance, like sugar pills, that have been shown in clinical studies to produce significant improvement in IBS symptoms through mind-body self-healing processes” (Kaptchuk et al., 2010, p. e15591). Patients in the control condition did not receive any treatment at all. Indeed, the placebo treatment—even when prescribed in this completely transparent manner—led to fewer symptoms, greater improvement, and better quality of life compared with no treatment. Thus, placebos can be both ethically prescribed *and* effective in treatment.

Can placebos be ethically used in research? Typically, clinical researchers do not seek to show that placebos can work. Rather, they seek to show that another treatment performs better than using a placebo. Thus, clinical researchers may have to assign patients to an experimental condition that they know constitutes an effective treatment. How do researchers reconcile this ethical difficulty?

Part of the answer to that question lies in the rules governing research with human participants (American Psychological Association [APA], 2002; World Medical Association, 2004). Providing an ineffective treatment—or any other treatment—may be considered ethical if participants understand the risks fully and still agree to participate in the study. This element of research

procedure, known as *informed consent*, stipulates that participants must be informed of factors in the research that may influence their willingness to participate before they consent to participate.

When participants in a clinical trial agree to take part in the study, they receive information about the possibility of getting a placebo rather than a treatment. Those participants who find the chances of receiving a placebo unacceptable may refuse to participate in the study. Colligan, who participated in the study with arthroscopic knee surgery, knew that he might be included in a sham surgery group, and he consented (Talbot, 2000). However, 44% of those interviewed about that study declined to participate (Moseley et al., 2002).

Despite the value of placebo controls in clinical research, some physicians and medical ethicists consider the use of ineffective treatment to be ethically unacceptable because the welfare of patients is not the primary concern. This is a valid concern if a patient-participant receives a placebo instead of the accepted standard of care (Kottow, 2007). These critics contend that control groups should receive the standard treatment rather than a placebo, and that placebo treatment is acceptable only if no treatment exists for the condition. Thus, opinion regarding the ethical acceptability of placebo treatment is divided, with some finding it acceptable and necessary for research and others objecting to the failure to provide an adequate standard of treatment.

IN SUMMARY

A placebo is an inactive substance or condition having the appearance of an active treatment. It may cause participants in an experiment to improve or change behavior because of their belief in the placebo's effectiveness and their prior experiences with receiving effective treatment. Although placebos can have a positive effect from the patient's point of view, they are a problem for the researcher. In general, a placebo's effects are about 35%. Its effects on reducing pain may be higher, whereas its effects on other conditions may be lower. Placebos can influence a wide variety of disorders and diseases.

Experimental designs that measure the efficacy of an intervention, such as a drug, typically use a placebo so that people in the control group (who receive the placebo) have the same expectations for success as do people in the experimental group (who receive the active treatment). Drug studies are usually double-blind designs, meaning that neither the participants nor the people administering the drug know who receives the placebo and who receives the active drug. Researchers in psychological treatment studies are often not "blind" concerning the treatment, but participants are, thus creating a single-blind design for these studies.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Think about a time when you received treatment for a health problem. How did your interaction with the treatment provider influence your beliefs about whether the treatment would work?

2-2 Research Methods in Psychology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 2-3** Identify the strengths and limitations of correlational, cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental, and ex post facto research designs

When you stroll through the breakfast food aisle of your supermarket, do you notice how many cereals boast

a high-fiber content? Some cereals are intentionally named to highlight fiber: All Bran, Multi-Bran, Fiber One, Fiber 7. This fascination with fiber may have been at its peak in 1989, when the American television show *Saturday Night Live* aired a mock advertisement for "Colon Blow," a cereal with 30,000 times the fiber content as compared to regular oat bran cereals!

Why were Americans so seemingly obsessed with fiber in the 1980s? One reason for this obsession was the belief that a high-fiber diet could reduce one's risk for cancer, particularly colon cancer. This link between fiber and cancer was first suggested in the early 1970s by Denis Burkitt, a British surgeon who worked in sub-Saharan Africa. Dr. Burkitt observed a very low incidence of colon cancer among native Ugandans. At the time, the Ugandan diet differed greatly from the typical Western diet. Ugandans ate plenty of fruits, vegetables, raw grains, and nuts but little red meat. Westerners, on the other hand, ate more red meat and fewer vegetables and nuts, and the grains they consumed were typically processed rather than raw. In short, Ugandans had a high-fiber diet and a low incidence of colon cancer. Dr. Burkitt proposed a seemingly intuitive explanation for this link: Dietary fiber speeds up certain digestive processes, leaving less time for the colon to be exposed to possible carcinogens.

Dr. Burkitt's belief in the benefits of dietary fiber was widely publicized and led to the marketing of fiber in foods and to decades of research on the possible connection between diet and cancer. In this section, we will review some of this research to illustrate a number of important aspects of health research. Most importantly, we will describe the different types of study designs that health researchers can use to investigate a question. We describe the strengths and weaknesses of these designs, as well as how our confidence in study results can depend on the strength of a research design. Additionally, we will show how health research is a continually evolving pursuit, where old beliefs are often replaced by newer discoveries as researchers acquire and synthesize new evidence.

Correlational Studies

When researchers seek to identify possible factors that predict or are related to a health condition, they use correlational studies. **Correlational studies** are often the first step in the research process, as they yield information about the degree of relationship between two variables. Correlational studies *describe* this relationship

and are, therefore, a type of *descriptive research* design. Although scientists cannot use a single descriptive study to determine a causal relationship—such as whether diet *causes* cancer—the degree of relationship between two factors may be exactly what a researcher wants to know.

To assess the degree of relationship between two variables (such as diet and cancer), the researcher measures each of these variables in a group of participants and then calculates the **correlation coefficient** between these measures. The calculation yields a number varying between -1.00 and $+1.00$. Positive correlations occur when the two variables increase or decrease together. For example, physical activity and longevity are positively correlated. Negative correlations occur when one of the variables increases as the other decreases, as is the case with the relationship between smoking and longevity. Correlations that are closer to 1.00 (either positive or negative) indicate stronger relationships than correlations that are closer to 0.00 . Small correlations—those less than 0.10 —can be *statistically significant* if they are based on a large number of observations, as in a study with many participants. However, such small correlations, though not random, offer the researcher very little ability to predict scores on one variable from knowledge of scores on the other variable.

In one of the first examinations of the link between diet and cancer, Armstrong and Doll (1975) utilized a correlational design. These researchers examined the correlation between over 20 countries' average meat consumption and the countries' incidence of colorectal cancer. Indeed, the study noted a large and positive

correlation of over 0.80 , showing that countries with high meat consumption had significantly higher rates of colon cancer than countries with low meat consumption. However, simply knowing this correlation did not allow the researchers to know whether red meat or some other aspect of diet *caused* cancer. High red meat consumption is generally related to other practices, such as low consumption of fiber, fruits, and vegetables, and could be related to environmental factors as well. Thus, this correlational study suggested a link between diet and cancer risk but could not answer questions of causality directly. Nevertheless, it pointed to a strong association between diet and colon cancer, which fueled the public's interest in consuming foods that might prevent cancer. This finding, together with Dr. Burkitt's highly publicized focus on dietary fiber, led to a widespread public perception of a causal link between fiber intake and colon cancer.

Cross-Sectional and Longitudinal Studies

When health researchers seek to understand how health problems develop over time, they use cross-sectional or longitudinal studies. **Cross-sectional studies** are those conducted at only one point in time, whereas **longitudinal studies** follow participants over an extended period. In a cross-sectional design, the investigator studies a group of people from at least two different age groups to determine the possible differences between the groups on some measure.

Longitudinal studies can yield information that cross-sectional studies cannot because they assess the same people over time, which allows researchers to identify developmental trends and patterns. However, longitudinal studies have one obvious drawback: They take time. Thus, longitudinal studies are costlier than cross-sectional studies, and they frequently require a large team of researchers.

Cross-sectional studies have the advantage of speed, but they have a disadvantage as well. Cross-sectional studies compare two or more separate groups of individuals, which make them incapable of revealing information about changes in individuals over a period of time. Cancer incidence increases with age, so a cross-sectional study comparing the cancer rates of young adults to those of older adults would undoubtedly show that older adults have higher rates of cancer. However, only a longitudinal study looking at the same people over a long period of time could confirm that



Blood pressure is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease, which means that people with high blood pressure are at increased risk, but not that high blood pressure causes cardiovascular disease.

age increases cancer incidence. (In a cross-sectional design, it is always possible that the older adults differed from young adults in some important way other than age, such as exposure to carcinogens).

Due to the time and resources needed to conduct longitudinal research, such studies on the link between diet and cancer did not appear until the late 1990s. For example, one study of over 27,000 Finnish males asked about consumption of fat, meat, fruits, vegetables, calcium, and fiber and followed the participants for eight years to track the incidence of colorectal cancer (Pietinen et al., 1999). In this study, colon cancer was linked to some aspects of diet (such as calcium) but was completely unrelated to fiber consumption. Many other longitudinal studies confirmed this lack of relationship. Thus, the results of these longitudinal studies—which provide stronger evidence than the earlier correlational studies—challenged the notion that dietary fiber reduces colon cancer risk.

Experimental Designs

Correlational studies, cross-sectional designs, and longitudinal studies all have important uses in psychology, but none of them can determine causality. Sometimes psychologists want information on the ability of one variable to cause or directly influence another. Such information requires a well-designed experiment.

An experiment consists of a comparison of at least two groups, often referred to as an **experimental group** and a **control group**. An experimental group's participants must receive treatment identical to that of the control group's participants, except that those in the experimental group receive one level of the **independent variable**, whereas people in the control group receive a different level. The independent variable is the condition of interest, which the experimenter systematically manipulates to observe its influence on a behavior or response—that is, on the **dependent variable**. The manipulation of the independent variable is a critical element of experimental design because this manipulation allows researchers to control the situation by choosing and creating the appropriate levels. In addition, good experimental design requires that experimenters assign participants to the experimental or control group *randomly* to ensure that the groups are equivalent at the beginning of the study.

Often the experimental condition consists of administering a treatment, whereas the control condition consists of withholding that treatment and perhaps

presenting some sort of placebo. If the experimental group later shows a score on the dependent variable different from the control group, then the independent variable has a cause-and-effect relationship with the dependent variable.

Several large studies have used an experimental design to study the link between diet and cancer (Beresford et al., 2006; Schatzkin et al., 2000). One study randomly assigned nearly 20,000 women to an intervention aimed at reducing fat intake and increasing fruit, vegetable, and fiber consumption (Beresford et al., 2006). Women randomly assigned to the control group were asked to continue eating as usual. Indeed, women in the experimental group changed their diet as instructed, but they did not show any reduced risk of cancer at an eight-year follow-up compared to the women in the control group. Due to its experimental design, this study provided strong evidence of a lack of a causal relationship between dietary fiber and colon cancer risk.

Figure 2.1 shows a typical experimental design comparing an experimental group with a control group, with counseling as the independent variable and body mass index (BMI) as the dependent variable.

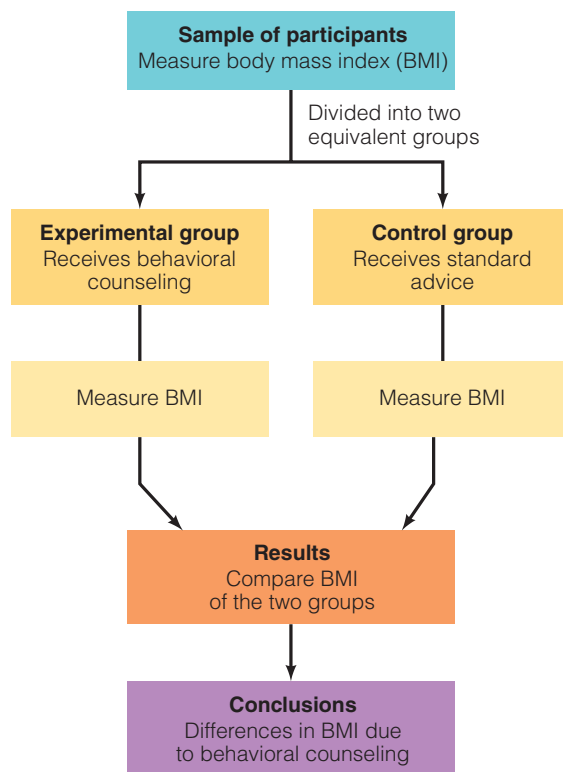


FIGURE 2.1 Example of an experimental method.

Ex Post Facto Designs

Ethical restrictions or practical limitations prevent researchers from manipulating many variables, such as gender, socioeconomic status, the death of a loved one, smoking, or sexual behaviors. This means that experiments are not possible with many such variables, but these limitations do not prevent researchers from studying these variables. When researchers cannot manipulate certain variables in a systematic manner, they sometimes rely on ex post facto designs.

An **ex post facto design**, one of several types of quasi-experimental studies, resembles an experiment in some ways but differs in others. Both types of studies involve contrasting groups to determine differences, but ex post facto designs do not involve the manipulation of independent variables. Researchers instead choose a variable of interest and select participants who already differ on this variable, called a **subject variable** (or *participant variable*). Both experiments and ex post facto studies involve the measurement of dependent variables. For example, researchers might study the link between meat consumption (subject variable) and cancer risk (dependent variable) by recruiting participants from two community groups: one group being a vegetarian/vegan cooking club and the other being the local chapter of Steak Lovers Anonymous. There is no random assignment in this ex post facto design, but the two groups would certainly differ in red meat consumption.

The comparison group in an ex post facto design is not an equivalent control group, because the participants were assigned to groups based on their food preferences rather than by random assignment. Without random assignment, the groups may potentially differ on variables other than food preferences, such as exercise, alcohol consumption, or smoking. The existence of these other differences means that researchers cannot pinpoint the subject variable as the cause of differences in cancer risk between the groups. However, findings about differences in risk between the two groups can yield useful information, making this type of study a choice for many investigations, particularly when random assignment is difficult or impossible.

the degree of association between two variables, but they can never show causation. Cross-sectional studies investigate a group of people at one point in time, whereas longitudinal studies follow the participants over an extended time period. Although longitudinal studies may yield more useful results than cross-sectional studies, they are more time consuming and more expensive. With experimental designs, researchers manipulate the independent variable so that any resulting differences between experimental and control groups can be attributed to their differential exposure to the independent variable. Experimental studies typically include a placebo given to people in a control group so that they will have the same expectations as people in the experimental group. Ex post facto studies are similar to experimental designs in that researchers compare two or more groups and then record group differences in the dependent variable but differ in that the independent variable is preexisting rather than manipulated.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Rank the research designs described in this section according to their ability to demonstrate a causal relationship between two variables.

2-3 Research Methods in Epidemiology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 2-4 Understand the difference between disease prevalence and disease incidence
- 2-5 Identify the strengths and limitations of observational methods, randomized controlled trials, and meta-analyses

IN SUMMARY

Health psychologists use several research methods, including correlational studies, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, experimental designs, and ex post facto studies. Correlational studies indicate

The field of health psychology benefits not only from the research methods of psychology but also from medical research—in particular, the research of epidemiologists. **Epidemiology** is a branch of medicine that investigates factors contributing to health or disease in a particular population (Porta et al., 2014; Tucker et al., 2004).

With the increase in chronic diseases during the 20th century, epidemiologists make fundamental contributions to health by identifying the risk factors for diseases. A **risk factor** is any characteristic or condition that occurs with greater frequency in a population with a disease than in a population free from that disease. That is, epidemiologists study those demographic and behavioral factors that relate to heart disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases (Tucker et al., 2004). For example, epidemiology studies were the first to detect a relationship between smoking and heart disease.

Two important concepts in epidemiology are prevalence and incidence. **Prevalence** refers to the proportion of the population that has a particular disease or condition at a specific time. **Incidence** measures the frequency of *new cases* during a specified period, usually one year (Tucker et al., 2004). With both prevalence and incidence, the number of people in the population at risk is divided into either the number of people with the disorder (prevalence) or the number of new cases in a particular time frame (incidence). The prevalence of a disorder may be quite different from the incidence of that disorder. For example, the prevalence of hypertension is much greater than the incidence because people can live for years after a diagnosis. In a given community, the annual *incidence* of hypertension might be 0.025, meaning that for every 1,000 people of a given age range, ethnic background, and gender, 25 people per year will receive a diagnosis of high blood pressure. But because hypertension is a chronic disorder, the prevalence will accumulate, producing a number much higher than 25 per 1,000. In contrast, for a disease such as influenza with a relatively short duration (due to either the patient's rapid recovery or quick death), the incidence per year will exceed the prevalence at any specific time during that year.

Research in epidemiology uses two broad methods: (1) observational studies and (2) randomized, controlled trials. Each method has its own requirements and yields specific information. Although epidemiologists use some of the same methods and procedures employed by psychologists, their terminology is not always the same. **Figure 2.2** lists the broad areas of epidemiological study and shows their approximate counterparts in the field of psychology.

Observational Methods

Epidemiologists use observational methods to estimate the occurrence of a specific disease in a given population. These methods do not show causes of the disease,

but researchers can draw inferences about possible factors that relate to the disease. Observational methods are like correlational studies in psychology; both show an association between two or more conditions, but neither can be used to demonstrate causation.

Two important types of observational methods are retrospective studies and prospective studies. **Retrospective studies** begin with a group of people already experiencing a particular disease or disorder and then look backward for characteristics or conditions that marked them as being different from people who do not have that problem. This approach is often used in early stages of research because it is relatively quick and inexpensive but can still yield potentially useful information. Indeed, many of the early studies on diet and cancer were retrospective studies in which cancer patients and healthy individuals provided general information about their past patterns of food consumption. Retrospective studies such as these are also referred to as **case-control studies**, because cases (people who have a health problem) are compared with controls (people who do not have the problem). Interestingly, many of these early retrospective studies from the 1980s *did* find an association between high-fiber intake and lower incidence of colon cancer (Trock, Lanza, & Greenwald, 1990), no doubt fueling the public's belief in the benefits of dietary fiber. However, one of the major drawbacks of retrospective studies is that they rely on people's recollections of past behavior, which are often inaccurate.

In contrast, **prospective studies** begin with a population of disease-free participants and follow them over a period of time to determine whether a given factor—such as current cigarette smoking, high blood pressure, or obesity—is related to a later health condition, such as heart disease or death. Prospective studies are longitudinal, making them equivalent to longitudinal studies in psychology: Both provide information about a group of participants over time, and both take a long time to complete. Generally, prospective studies yield stronger evidence than retrospective studies. Prospective studies on diet and colon cancer also led to a different conclusion than retrospective studies. In most prospective studies, which appeared in the 1990s, fiber intake was *not* associated with decreased risk of colon cancer (Pietinen et al., 1999).

Randomized Controlled Trials

A second type of epidemiological research is the randomized controlled trial, which is equivalent to experimental research in psychology. With a randomized

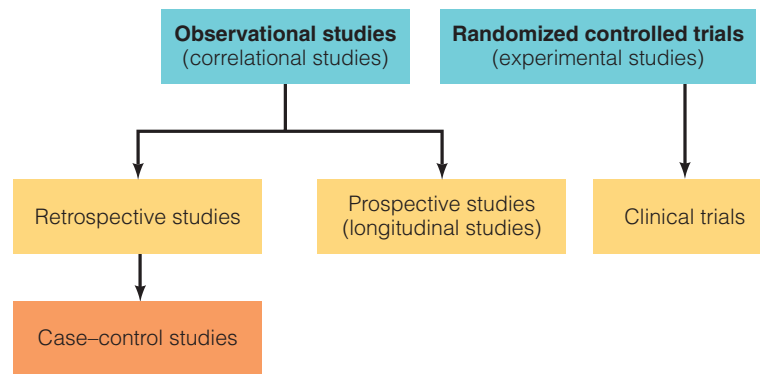


FIGURE 2.2 Research methods in epidemiology, with their psychology counterparts in parentheses.

controlled trial, researchers randomly assign participants to either a study group or a control group, thus making the two groups equal on all pertinent factors except the variable being studied. (In psychology, this would be called the independent variable.) Researchers must also control variables other than those of primary interest to prevent them from affecting the outcome.

A randomized controlled trial, as with the experimental method in psychology, must avoid the problem of **self-selection**; that is, it must not let participants choose whether to be in the experimental group or the control group, but rather, it must assign them to groups randomly. The potential for participants to self-select into a study group or a control group can change the results of a study dramatically, underscoring the importance of random assignment. For example, a study of a workplace wellness program's effectiveness found that employees who self-selected into a wellness program had much better outcomes than those who chose not to participate in the program (Jones, Molitor, & Reif, 2019). However, when the researchers compared participants who were randomly assigned to participate in the program with those who were randomly assigned to a control condition, the findings were far different; the program had no effect. The researchers concluded that self-selection was responsible for the promising findings because healthier workers chose to be a part of the program, but less healthy workers chose not to.

A **clinical trial** is a research design that tests the effects of a new drug or medical treatment. Many clinical trials are randomized controlled trials that feature random assignment and control of other variables, which allow researchers to determine the effectiveness of the new treatment. Epidemiologists often regard randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind trials as the

“gold standard” of research designs (Kertesz, 2003). This design is commonly used to measure the effectiveness of new drugs, as well as psychological and educational interventions. For example, all drugs approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must first undergo extensive clinical trials of this nature, demonstrating that the drug is effective and has acceptable levels of side effects or other risks.

When a controlled clinical trial demonstrates the effectiveness of a new drug or intervention, the researchers often publish and publicize the findings so that others can adopt the treatment. In some cases, a controlled trial may fail to demonstrate the effectiveness of a new intervention. When trials fail to show a treatment to be effective, researchers may be less likely to publish the findings. By some estimates, studies that fail to find an intervention as effective are three times less likely to be published (Dwan et al., 2008). Thus, researchers, health care providers, and the public are more likely to learn about research showing a particular treatment to be effective but less likely to learn about research showing the same treatment to be ineffective.

Several safeguards are now in place to help ensure that researchers and health care providers can access all available evidence, rather than just the evidence that supports a treatment. For example, major medical journals require that researchers comply with clear guidelines in reporting results of a clinical trial. These guidelines—known as the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) guidelines (Schulz, Altman, Moher, & the CONSORT Group, 2010)—require researchers to register their clinical trial in a registry *prior* to the start of the study. This database allows anybody to locate all clinical trials conducted on a treatment, not simply the trials that found a treatment to be effective.

Meta-Analysis

As we have seen, researchers use a variety of approaches to study behavior and health-related outcomes. Unfortunately, research on the same topic may not yield consistent findings, putting researchers (and everyone else) in the position of wondering which findings are the most valid. Some studies are larger than others, and when it comes to accepting a result, size matters. But sometimes, even large studies furnish results that seem contradictory. However, the statistical technique of **meta-analysis** allows researchers to evaluate many research studies on the same topic, even if the research methods differed. The results from a meta-analysis include a measure of the overall size of the effect of the variable under study. The ability to offer an estimate of the size of an effect is an advantage. If an effect is statistically significant but small, then people should not be encouraged to change their behavior based on such findings; doing so would provide too few benefits. On the other hand, if an effect is large, then working toward change would be beneficial, even if it is difficult.

Recently, several meta-analyses have synthesized decades of research on diet and colon cancer. In general, dietary fiber shows a weak association, if any, to colon cancer risk (Vargas & Thompson, 2012; Yao et al., 2017). However, this does not mean that diet is unimportant. A meta-analysis of 19 case-control studies and 6 prospective studies show that a diet high in red meat is strongly associated with greater risk of colon cancer (Aune et al., 2013).

Thus, Dr. Burkitt may have been right all along in speculating that the diet of sub-Saharan Africans protected them against colon cancer. But it wasn't the fiber that mattered; it was the absence of red meat. As researchers used stronger designs and larger samples to investigate the link between diet and colon cancer, the evidence began to show that old beliefs about the role of fiber in colon cancer were inaccurate but pointed to the role of red meat instead.

An Example of Epidemiological Research: The Alameda County Study

Epidemiological studies have been crucially important in identifying the role of behavior in health. A famous example of an epidemiological study is the Alameda County Study in California, an ongoing prospective study of a single community to identify health

practices that may protect against death and disease. The Alameda County Study was one of the first studies to show how several behaviors decreased people's risk of mortality.

In 1965, epidemiologist Lester Breslow and his colleagues from the Human Population Laboratory of the California State Department of Public Health began a survey of a sample of households in Alameda County, California. The researchers sent detailed questionnaires to each resident 20 years of age or older; nearly 7,000 people returned surveys. Among other questions, these participants answered questions about seven basic health practices: (1) getting seven or eight hours of sleep daily, (2) eating breakfast almost every day, (3) rarely eating between meals, (4) drinking alcohol in moderation or not at all, (5) not smoking cigarettes, (6) exercising regularly, and (7) maintaining weight near the prescribed ideal.

At the time of the original survey in 1965, only cigarette smoking had been implicated as a health risk. Evidence that any of the other six practices predicted health or mortality was quite weak. Because several of these practices require some amount of good health, it was necessary to investigate the possibility that original health status might confound subsequent death rates. To control for these possible confounding effects, the Alameda County investigators asked residents about their physical disabilities, acute and chronic illnesses, physical symptoms, and current levels of energy.

A follow-up five and a half years later (Belloc, 1973) revealed that participants who practiced six or seven of the basic health-related behaviors were far less likely to have died than those who practiced zero to three. A nine-year follow-up determined the relationship between mortality and the seven health practices, considered individually as well as in combination (Berkman & Breslow, 1983; Wingard, Berkman, & Brand, 1982). Cigarette smoking, lack of physical activity, and alcohol consumption were strongly related to mortality, whereas obesity and too much or too little sleep were only weakly associated with increased death rates. Skipping breakfast and snacking between meals did not predict mortality.

Moreover, the number of close social relationships also predicted mortality: People with few social contacts were almost three times more likely to have died than were those with many such contacts (Berkman & Syme, 1979). The Alameda County Study was the first study to uncover a link between social relationships and mortality. As you will learn in the rest of this book, social

relationships and social support are important factors in physical health. In fact, people who have poor social relationships have the same heightened risk of mortality

as people who smoke more than 15 cigarettes per day (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010).



BECOMING AN INFORMED READER OF HEALTH-RELATED RESEARCH ON THE INTERNET

Not long ago, health research reports appeared mainly in scientific journals, which were read primarily by physicians. People typically heard of this research from their physicians. Today, diverse outlets—including television, newspapers, and the Internet—publicize the “latest and greatest” health research. However, with this increased publicity comes an increasing problem: Some of this information may not be trustworthy. The news media are in the business of getting people’s attention, so coverage of health information may mislead by focusing on the more sensational findings. And, of course, some commercial advertisements—promoting, for instance, a revolutionary weight-loss program or a simple way to stop smoking—may ignore or distort scientific evidence in order to boost sales.

Over 80% of Internet users turn to the Internet for health information (Pew Internet, 2012). Over 70% of Americans used the Internet during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic to search for information about the coronavirus (Anderson M., & Vogels, E.A. (2020). The Internet, in particular, presents not only a wealth of useful health information but also some misleading information. How can you judge the worth of health-related information you read or hear? Here are several questions you should ask yourself as you evaluate health information on the Internet.

1. Who runs the website? Any reputable website should clearly

state who is responsible for the information. You can often find this information in a website’s “About Us” section. Often, the website address can also tell you important information. Websites ending in “.gov,” “.edu,” or “.org” are run by government, educational, or nonprofit groups. These sites are likely to present unbiased information. In contrast, websites that end in “.com” are run by commercial enterprises and may exist mainly to sell products.

2. What is the website’s purpose? Websites existing primarily to sell products may not present unbiased information. You should be especially wary of websites that promise “breakthroughs” or try to sell quick, easy, and miraculous cures. Dramatic breakthroughs are rare in science.
3. What is the evidence supporting a claim? Ideally, a website should report information based on studies conducted by trained scientists who are affiliated with universities, research hospitals, or government agencies. Furthermore, websites should include references to these published scientific studies. In contrast, claims supported by testimonials of “satisfied” consumers or from commercial enterprises are less likely to come from scientific research.
4. Is there adequate information available to evaluate a scientific

study’s research design? Findings are more reliable if a study uses a large number of participants. If a study suggests that a factor *causes* a particular health outcome, does it use an experimental design with random assignment? Does it control for placebo effects? If the design is prospective or retrospective, did the researchers adequately control for smoking, diet, exercise, and other possible confounding variables? Lastly, is it clear who participated in the study? If a study uses a unique population, then the results may only be applicable to similar individuals.

5. How is the information reviewed before it is posted? Most reputable health information will have somebody with medical or research credentials—such as an MD or a PhD—author or review the material.
6. How current is the information? The date of posting or last review should be clear.

Scientific knowledge evolves continually, so the best information is up to date. You can find many of these tips, and others, on the National Institutes of Health website (www.nih.gov). This website, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov), is an excellent source for the latest scientific information on a wide variety of health topics.

If some health practices predict greater risk of *mortality*, then a second question concerns how these same factors relate to *morbidity*, or disease. A condition that predicts death need not also predict disease. Many disabilities, chronic illnesses, and illness symptoms do not inevitably lead to death. Therefore, it is important to know whether basic health practices and social contacts predict later physical health. Do health practices merely contribute to survival time, or do they also raise an individual's general level of health?

IN SUMMARY

Epidemiologists conduct research using designs and terminology that differ from those used by psychology researchers. For example, epidemiologists use the concepts of risk factor, prevalence, and incidence. A risk factor is any condition that occurs with greater frequency in people with a disease than it does in people free from that same disease. Prevalence refers to the proportion of the population that has a particular disease at a specific time, whereas incidence measures the frequency of new cases of the disease during a specified period of time.

To investigate factors that contribute either to health or to the frequency and distribution of a disease, epidemiologists use research methods that are similar to those used by psychologists, but the terminology varies. Observational studies, which are like correlational studies, can be either retrospective or prospective. Retrospective studies begin with a group of people already suffering from a disease and then look for characteristics of these people that differ from those of people who do not have the disease; prospective studies are longitudinal designs that follow the forward development of a group of people. Randomized controlled trials are like experimental designs in psychology. Clinical trials, a common type of randomized controlled trial, are typically used to determine the effectiveness of new drugs, but they can be used in other controlled studies. The statistical technique of meta-analysis allows researchers to examine a group of studies that have researched the variable of interest and provide an overall estimate of the size of the effect.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Rank the research designs described in this section according to their ability to demonstrate a causal relationship between two variables.

2-4 Determining Causation

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 2-6 Understand the difference between absolute risk and relative risk
- 2-7 Identify the seven criteria that can help researchers infer a causal relationship from non-experimental studies

As noted earlier, both prospective and retrospective studies can identify risk factors for a disease, but they do not demonstrate causation. This section looks at the risk factor approach as a means of suggesting causation and then examines evidence that cigarette smoking *causes* disease.

The Risk Factor Approach

The risk factor approach was popularized by the Framingham Heart Study (Levy & Brink, 2005), a large-scale epidemiology investigation that began in 1948 and included more than 5,000 men and women in Framingham, Massachusetts. From its early years and continuing to the present, this study has allowed researchers to identify risk factors for cardiovascular disease (CVD) such as serum cholesterol, gender, high blood pressure, cigarette smoking, and obesity. These risk factors do not necessarily cause CVD, but they relate to it in some way. Obesity, for example, may not be a direct cause of heart disease, but it is generally associated with hypertension, which is strongly associated with CVD. Thus, obesity is a risk factor for CVD.

Two common methods exist for conveying risk: absolute and relative risk. **Absolute risk** refers to the person's chances of developing a disease or disorder independent of any risk that other people may have for that disease or disorder. These chances tend to be small. For example, a smoker's risk of dying of lung cancer

during any one year is about 1 in 1,000. When smokers hear their risk expressed in such terms, they may not recognize the hazards of their behavior (Kertesz, 2003). Other ways of presenting the same information may seem more threatening. For example, a male smoker's risk of getting lung cancer in his *lifetime* is much higher (about 15 in 100) (Crispo et al., 2004).

Relative risk refers to the ratio of the incidence (or prevalence) of a disease in an exposed group to the incidence (or prevalence) of that disease in the unexposed group. The relative risk of the unexposed group is always 1.00. Thus, a relative risk of 1.50 indicates that the exposed group is 50% more likely to develop the disease in question than the unexposed group; a relative risk of 0.70 means that the rate of disease in the exposed group is only 70% of the rate in the unexposed group. Expressed in terms of relative risk, smoking seems much more dangerous. For example, male cigarette smokers have a relative risk of about 23.3 for dying of lung cancer and a relative risk of 14.6 for dying of laryngeal cancer (Anderson, M., & Vogels, E.A. (2020). This means that, compared with nonsmokers, men who smoke are more than 23 times as likely to die of lung cancer and more than 14 times as likely to die of laryngeal cancer.

The high relative risk for lung cancer among people who have a long history of cigarette smoking may suggest that most smokers will die of lung cancer. However, such is not the case: Most smokers will *not* die of lung cancer. About 40% of smokers who die of cancer will develop cancer in sites other than the lung (Armour et al., 2005). Furthermore, the absolute frequency of death due to heart disease makes a smoker almost as likely to die of heart disease (20% of deaths among smokers) as lung cancer (28% of deaths among smokers). Smokers have a much higher relative risk of dying from lung cancer than CVD compared to nonsmokers, but their *absolute risk* of dying from CVD is much more similar.

Cigarettes and Disease: Is There a Causal Relationship?

In 1994, representatives from all the major tobacco companies came before the Congress House Subcommittee on Health to argue that cigarettes do not cause health problems such as heart disease and lung cancer. The crux of their argument was that no scientific study had ever proven that cigarette smoking causes heart disease



Heads of the United States' largest tobacco companies testify before Congress, arguing that no experimental evidence shows that tobacco causes cancer.

AP Images/John Duricka

or lung cancer in humans. Technically, their contention was correct; only experimental studies can absolutely demonstrate causation, and no such experimental study has ever been (or ever will be) conducted on humans.

During the past 50 years, however, researchers have used nonexperimental studies to establish a link between cigarette smoking and several diseases, especially CVD and lung cancer. Accumulated findings from these studies present an example of how researchers can use nonexperimental studies to make deductions about a causal relationship. In other words, experimental, randomized, placebo-controlled, double-blind studies are not required before scientists can infer a causal link between the independent variable (smoking) and the dependent variables (heart disease and lung cancer). Epidemiologists draw conclusions that a causal relationship exists if certain conditions are met (Susser, 1991; USDHHS, 2004).

The first criterion is that a *dose-response relationship* must exist between a possible cause and changes in the prevalence or incidence of a disease. A **dose-response relationship** is a direct, consistent association between an independent variable, such as a behavior, and a dependent variable, such as a disease. In other words, the higher the dose, the higher the death rate. A body of research evidence (Bhat et al., 2008; Papadopoulos et al., 2011; USDHHS, 1990, 2004) has demonstrated a dose-response relationship between both the number of cigarettes smoked per day and the number of years that one has smoked and

TABLE 2.1 Criteria for Determining Causation Between a Condition and a Disease

1. A dose–response relationship exists between the condition and the disease.
2. Removing the condition reduces the prevalence or incidence of the disease.
3. The condition precedes the disease.
4. A cause-and-effect relationship between the condition and the disease is physiologically plausible.
5. Relevant research data consistently reveal a relationship between the condition and the disease.
6. The strength of the relationship between the condition and the disease is relatively high.
7. Studies revealing a relationship between the condition and the disease are well designed.

the subsequent incidence of heart disease, lung cancer, and stroke.

Second, the prevalence or incidence of a *disease should decline with the removal of the possible cause*. Research (USDHHS, 1990, 2004) has consistently demonstrated that quitting cigarette smoking lowers one’s risk of CVD and decreases one’s risk of lung cancer. People who continue to smoke continue to have increased risks of these diseases. Even laws banning smoking in the workplace have resulted in decreases in the number of heart attacks attributable to secondhand exposure to cigarette smoke (Hurt et al., 2012).

Third, the *cause must precede the disease*. Cigarette smoking almost always precedes incidence of disease. (We have little evidence that people tend to begin cigarette smoking as a means of coping with heart disease or lung cancer.)

Fourth, a *cause-and-effect relationship between the condition and the disease must be plausible*; that is, it must be consistent with other data, and it must make sense from a biological viewpoint. Although scientists are just beginning to understand the exact mechanisms responsible for the effect of cigarette smoking on the cardiovascular system and the lungs (USDHHS, 2004), such a physiological connection is plausible.

Fifth, *research findings must be consistent*. For more than 50 years, evidence from ex post facto and correlational studies, as well as from various epidemiological studies, has demonstrated a strong and consistent relationship between cigarette smoking and disease.

Sixth, the *strength of the association between the condition and the disease must be relatively high*. Again, research has revealed that cigarette smokers have at least a twofold risk for CVD and are about 18 times more likely than nonsmokers to die of lung cancer

(USDHHS, 2004). Because other studies have found comparable relative risk figures, epidemiologists accept cigarette smoking as a causal agent for both CVD and lung cancer.

The final criterion for inferring causality is the existence of *appropriately designed studies*. Although no experimental designs with human participants have been reported on the relationship between cigarettes and disease, well-designed observational studies can yield the results equivalent to experimental studies (USDHHS, 2004), and many these observational studies consistently reveal a close association between cigarette smoking and both CVD and lung cancer.

Because each of these seven criteria is clearly met by the evidence against smoking, epidemiologists can discount the argument of tobacco company representatives that cigarette smoking has not been proven to cause disease. When evidence is as overwhelming as it is in this case, scientists infer a causal link between cigarette smoking and a variety of diseases, including heart disease and lung cancer. **Table 2.1** summarizes the criteria for determining causation.

IN SUMMARY

A risk factor is any characteristic or condition that occurs with greater frequency in people with a disease than it does in people free from that disease. Risk may be expressed either in terms of the absolute risk, a person’s risk of developing a disease independent of other factors, or the relative risk, the ratio of risk of those exposed to a risk factor compared with those not exposed.

Although the risk factor approach alone cannot determine causation, epidemiologists use several criteria for determining a cause-and-effect

relationship between a condition and a disease: (1) A dose–response relationship must exist between the condition and the disease; (2) the removal of the condition must reduce the prevalence or incidence of the disease; (3) the condition must precede the disease; (4) the causal relationship between the condition and the disease must be physiologically plausible; (5) research data must consistently reveal a relationship between the condition and the disease; (6) the strength of the relationship between the condition and the disease must be relatively high; and (7) the relationship between the condition and the disease must be based on well-designed studies. When findings meet all seven of these criteria, scientists can infer a cause-and-effect relationship between an independent variable (such as smoking) and a dependent variable (such as heart disease or lung cancer).

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. How do each of the seven criteria described in this section help epidemiologists make the case that an identified risk factor is a likely *cause* of disease?

2-5 Research Tools

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 2-8** Recognize the important role of theory in guiding health research
- 2-9** Understand how reliability and validity improve measurement in health research

Psychologists frequently rely on two important tools to conduct research: theoretical models and psychometric instruments. Many, but not all, psychology studies use a theoretical model and attempt to test hypotheses suggested by that model. Also, many psychology studies rely on measuring devices to assess behaviors, physiological functions, attitudes, abilities, personality traits, and other variables. This section provides a brief discussion of these two tools.

The Role of Theory in Research

As the scientific study of human behavior, psychology shares the use of scientific methods to investigate natural phenomena with other disciplines. The work of science is not restricted to research methodology; it also involves constructing theoretical models to serve as vehicles for making sense of research findings. Health psychologists have developed several models and theories to explain health-related behaviors and conditions, such as stress, pain, smoking, alcohol abuse, and unhealthy eating habits. To the uninitiated, theories may seem impractical and unimportant, but scientists regard them as practical tools that give both direction and meaning to their research.

Scientific **theory** is “a set of related assumptions that allow scientists to use logical deductive reasoning to formulate testable hypotheses” (Feist & Feist, 2006, p. 4). Theories and scientific observations have an interactive relationship. A theory gives meaning to observations, and observations, in turn, fit into and alter the theory to explain these observations. Theories, then, are dynamic and become more powerful as they expand to explain more and more relevant observations.

The role of theory in health psychology is basically the same as it is in any other scientific discipline. First, a useful theory should generate research—both descriptive research and hypothesis testing. Descriptive research deals with measurement, labeling, and categorization of observations. Hypothesis testing identifies the conditions that relate to and cause the development of a health condition.

Second, a useful theory should organize and explain the observations derived from research and make them intelligible. Unless research findings are organized into some meaningful framework, scientists have no clear direction to follow in their pursuit of further knowledge. A useful theory of the psychosocial factors in obesity, for example, should integrate what researchers know about such factors and allow researchers to frame discerning questions that stimulate further research.

Third, a useful theory should serve as a guide to action, permitting the practitioner to predict behavior and implement strategies to change behavior. A practitioner concerned with helping others change health-related behaviors is greatly aided by a theory of behavior change. For instance, a cognitive therapist will follow a cognitive theory of learning to make

decisions about helping clients and will thus focus on changing the thought processes that affect clients' behaviors. Similarly, psychologists with other theoretical orientations rely on their theories to supply them with solutions to the many questions they confront in their practice.

Theories, then, are useful and necessary tools for the development of any scientific discipline; they generate research that leads to more knowledge, organize and explain observations, and help the practitioner (both the researcher and the clinician) handle a variety of daily problems, such as predicting behavior and helping people change unhealthy practices.

The Role of Psychometrics in Research

Health psychologists study a number of phenomena that cannot be described in terms of simple physical measurements, like weight or length. These phenomena include behaviors and conditions such as stress, coping, pain, hostility, eating habits, and personality. To study each of these phenomena, health psychologists must develop new measures that can reliably and validly measure differences between people. Indeed, one of psychology's most important contributions to behavioral medicine and behavioral health is its sophisticated methods of measuring important psychological factors in health.

For any measuring instrument to be useful, it must be both *reliable* (consistent) and *valid* (accurate). The problems of establishing reliability and validity are critical to the development of any measurement scale.

Establishing Reliability The **reliability** of a measuring instrument is the extent to which it yields consistent results. A reliable ruler, for example, will yield the same measurement across different situations. In health psychology, reliability is most frequently determined by comparing scores on two or more administrations of the same instrument (*test-retest reliability*) or by comparing ratings obtained from two or more judges observing the same phenomenon (*interrater reliability*).

Measuring psychological phenomena is less precise than measuring physical dimensions (such as length). Thus, perfect reliability is nearly impossible to come by, and researchers most frequently describe reliability

in terms of either correlation coefficients or percentages. The correlation coefficient, which expresses the degree of correspondence between two sets of scores, is the same statistic used in correlational studies. High reliability coefficients (such as 0.80 to 0.90) indicate that participants have obtained nearly the same scores on two administrations of a test. Percentages can express the degree of agreement between the independent ratings of observers. If the agreement between two or more raters is high (such as 85% to 95%), then the instrument should elicit nearly the same ratings from two or more interviewers.

Establishing reliability for the numerous assessment instruments used in health psychology is obviously a formidable task, but it is an essential first step in developing useful measuring devices.

Establishing Validity A second step in constructing assessment scales is to establish their validity. **Validity** is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is designed to measure. A valid ruler, for example, will indicate that an object measures 2 centimeters, but only when that object really does measure 2 centimeters. In the context of a psychological measure such as a stress assessment, for example, a valid stress measure should tell you a person is under high stress, but only when that person experiences high stress.

Psychologists determine the validity of a measuring instrument by comparing scores from that instrument with some independent or outside criterion—that is, a standard that exists independently of the instrument being validated. In health psychology, that criterion can be a physiological measure, like a physiological stress response such as elevated blood pressure. A criterion can also be some future event, such as a diagnosis of heart disease or the development of diabetes. An instrument capable of predicting who will receive such a diagnosis and who will remain disease free has *predictive validity*. For example, scales that measure attitudes about the body predict the development of eating disorders. For such a scale to demonstrate predictive validity, it must be administered to participants who are currently free of disease. If people who score high on the scale eventually have higher rates of disease than participants with low scores, then the scale can be said to have predictive validity; that is, it differentiates between participants who will remain disease free and those who will become ill.

IN SUMMARY

Two important tools aid the work of scientists: useful theories and accurate measurement. Useful theories (1) generate research, (2) predict and explain research data, and (3) help the practitioner solve various problems. Accurate psychometric instruments are both reliable and valid. *Reliability* is the extent to which an assessment device measures consistently. *Validity* is the extent to which an assessment instrument measures what it is supposed to measure.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Holt-Lunstad et al. (2010) showed that people with poor social relationships die earlier than people with more supportive social relationships. Can you develop a theory to explain this link? How might your theory generate additional research?
2. Describe the difference between reliability and validity and why both are necessary elements of good measurement.

Questions

This chapter has addressed five basic questions:

1. What are placebos, and how do they affect research and treatment?

A placebo is an inactive substance or condition that has the appearance of an active treatment and that may cause participants to improve or change because of a belief in the placebo's efficacy. In other words, a placebo is any treatment that is effective because patients' expectations based on previous experiences with treatment lead them to believe that it will be effective.

A placebo's therapeutic effect is about 35%, but that rate varies with many conditions, including treatment setting and culture. Placebos, including sham surgery, can be effective in a wide variety of situations, such as decreasing pain, reducing asthma attacks, diminishing anxiety, and decreasing symptoms of Parkinson's disease. Nocebos are placebos that produce adverse effects.

Placebos' positive effects are usually beneficial to patients, but they create problems for researchers attempting to determine the efficacy of a treatment. Experimental designs that measure the effectiveness of a treatment intervention balance that intervention against a placebo so that people in the control (placebo) group have the same expectations as do people in the experimental (treatment intervention) group. Experimental studies frequently use designs in which the participants

do not know which treatment condition they are in (*single-blind* design) or in which neither the participants nor the people administering the treatment know who receives the placebo and who receives the treatment intervention (*double-blind* design).

2. How does psychology research contribute to health knowledge?

Psychology has contributed to health knowledge in at least five important ways. First is its long tradition of techniques to change behavior. Second is an emphasis on health rather than disease. Third is the development of reliable and valid measuring instruments. Fourth is the construction of useful theoretical models to explain health-related research. Fifth is the various research methods used in psychology. This chapter mostly deals with the fifth contribution.

The variety of research methods used in psychology include (1) correlational studies, (2) cross-sectional studies and longitudinal studies, (3) experimental designs, and (4) ex post facto designs. Correlational studies indicate the degree of association or correlation between two variables, but by themselves, they cannot determine a cause-and-effect relationship. Cross-sectional studies investigate a group of people at one point in time, whereas longitudinal studies follow the participants over an extended period. In general, longitudinal studies are more likely to yield useful and specific results, but they are more time consuming and expensive than cross-sectional studies.

With experimental designs, researchers manipulate the independent variable so that any resulting differences in the dependent variable between experimental and control groups can be attributed to their differential exposure to the independent variable. Ex post facto designs are like experimental designs in that researchers compare two or more groups and then record group differences on the dependent variable. However, in the ex post facto study, the experimenter merely selects a subject variable on which two or more groups have naturally divided themselves rather than create differences through manipulation.

3. How has epidemiology contributed to health knowledge?

Epidemiology has contributed the concepts of risk factor, prevalence, and incidence. A risk factor is any characteristic or condition that occurs with greater frequency in people with a disease than it does in people free from that disease. Prevalence is the proportion of the population that has a particular disease at a specific time; incidence measures the frequency of new cases of the disease during a specified time.

Many of the research methods used in epidemiology are quite like those used in psychology. Epidemiology uses at least three basic kinds of research methodology: (1) observational studies, (2) randomized controlled trials, and (3) natural experiments. Observational studies, which parallel the correlation studies used in psychology, are of two types: retrospective and prospective. Retrospective studies are usually *case-control studies* that begin with a group of people already suffering from a disease (the cases) and then look for characteristics of these people that are different from those of people who do not have that disease (the controls). Prospective studies are longitudinal designs that follow the forward development of a population or sample. Randomized controlled trials are like experimental designs in psychology. In these studies, researchers manipulate the independent variable to determine its effect on the dependent variable. Randomized controlled trials can demonstrate cause-and-effect relationships. The most common type of randomized controlled trial is the clinical

trial, which is frequently used to measure the efficacy of medications. The statistical technique of meta-analysis allows psychologists and epidemiologists to combine the results of many studies to develop a picture of the size of an effect.

4. How can scientists determine if a behavior causes a disease?

Seven criteria are used for determining a cause-and-effect relationship between a condition and a disease: (1) A dose-response relationship must exist between the condition and the disease; (2) the removal of the condition must reduce the prevalence or incidence of the disease; (3) the condition must precede the disease; (4) the causal relationship between the condition and the disease must be physiologically plausible; (5) the research data must consistently reveal a relationship between the condition and the disease; (6) the strength of the relationship between the condition and the disease must be relatively high; and (7) the relationship between the condition and the disease must be based on well-designed studies.

5. How do theory and measurement contribute to health psychology?

Theories are important tools used by scientists to (1) generate research, (2) predict and explain research data, and (3) help the practitioner solve a variety of problems. Health psychologists use a variety of measurement instruments to assess behaviors and theoretical concepts. To be useful, these psychometric instruments must be both reliable and valid. Reliability is the extent to which an assessment device measures consistently, and validity is the extent to which an assessment instrument measures what it is supposed to measure.

Suggested Readings

Kertesz, L. (2003). The numbers behind the news. *Healthplan*, 44(5), 10–14, 16, 18. Louise Kertesz offers a thoughtful analysis of the problems of reporting the findings from health research and gives some tips for understanding findings from research studies, including a definition of some of the terminology used in epidemiology research.

Price, D. D., Finniss, D. G., & Benedetti, F. (2008). A comprehensive review of the placebo effect: Recent advances and current thought. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 59, 565–590. This article by one of the leading researchers on the topic of placebo effects describes research on how placebos may work to effect cures.

Russo, E. (2004, August 2). New views on mind–body connection. *The Scientist*, 18(15), 28. This short article describes current research on the placebo and how high-tech methods allow the investigation of brain responses to placebos.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 3-1** Understand the difference between illness behavior and sick role behavior
- 3-2** Recognize the many factors that determine whether people seek medical attention for their symptoms
- 3-3** Understand the rights and duties that come with the sick role
- 3-4** Recognize the nonmedical sources that people often turn to get medical information
- 3-5** Recognize the role of employment and insurance coverage in receiving medical care
- 3-6** Identify the characteristics of practitioners and patients that may make interactions difficult and those that may help medical interactions
- 3-7** Recognize the challenges that hospital patients may face
- 3-8** Identify several techniques that help children cope when receiving medical treatment

CHAPTER 3

Seeking and Receiving Health Care

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Lance Armstrong

- Seeking Medical Attention
- Seeking Medical Information from Nonmedical Sources
- Receiving Medical Care

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on three basic questions:

1. Which factors relate to seeking medical attention?
2. Where do people seek medical information?
3. What problems do people encounter in receiving medical care?

From 1996 to 1998, Lance Armstrong underwent chemotherapy and surgery on both his testicles and brain; eventually his cancer went into remission. Armstrong is one of the lucky few survivors of advanced-stage cancer. His odds of survival would have surely been better had he sought medical care earlier.

Why do some people, such as Armstrong, seem to behave unwisely on issues of personal health? Why do others seek medical treatment when they are not ill? Psychologists have formulated several models in the attempt to predict and to make sense of health-related behaviors. This chapter looks briefly at some of these models as they relate to health-seeking behavior; Chapter 4 examines theory-driven research about people's adherence to medical advice.

3-1 Seeking Medical Attention

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 3-1 Understand the difference between illness behavior and sick role behavior
- 3-2 Recognize the many factors that determine whether people seek medical attention for their symptoms
- 3-3 Understand the rights and duties that come with the sick role

How do people know when to seek medical attention? How do they know whether they are ill or not? When Armstrong experienced symptoms that were likely caused by advancing cancer, he tried to ignore them, attributed them to anything but cancer, and consulted friends before making an



Check **YOUR BELIEFS**

Regarding Seeking and Receiving Health Care

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. If I feel well, I believe that I am healthy. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. I see my dentist twice yearly for regular checkups. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. The last time I sought medical care was in a hospital emergency room. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. If I had a disease that would be a lot of trouble to manage, I would rather not know about it until I was really sick. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. I try not to allow being sick to slow me down. <input type="checkbox"/> 6. If I don't understand my physician's recommendations, I ask questions until I understand what I should do. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 7. I think it's better to follow medical advice than to ask questions and cause problems, especially in the hospital. <input type="checkbox"/> 8. When facing a stressful medical experience, I think the best strategy is to try not to think about it and hope that it will be over soon. <input type="checkbox"/> 9. When I have severe symptoms, I try to find out as much information as possible about my medical condition. <input type="checkbox"/> 10. I believe that if people get sick, it is because they were due to get sick and there was nothing they could have done to prevent their sickness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 11. In order not to frighten patients faced with a difficult medical procedure, it is best to tell them that they won't be hurt, even if they will. |
|--|--|--|

Items 2, 6, and 9 represent healthy attitudes or behaviors, but each of the other items relates to conditions that may present a risk or lead you to less effective health care. As you read this chapter, you will see the advantages of adopting healthy attitudes or behaviors to make more effective use of the health care system.

appointment with a physician. Was Armstrong unusually reluctant to seek medical care, or was his behavior typical? Deciding when formal medical care is necessary is a complex problem and is compounded by personal, social, and economic factors.

Before we consider these factors, we should define three terms: *health*, *disease*, and *illness*. Although the meaning of these concepts may seem obvious, their definitions are elusive. Is health the absence of illness, or is it the attainment of some positive state? In the first chapter, we saw that the World Health Organization (WHO) defines *health* as positive physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely as the absence of disease or infirmity. Unfortunately, this definition has little practical value for people trying to make decisions about their state of health or illness, such as Armstrong's decision about whether to seek medical attention for his cancer-related symptoms.

Another difficulty for many people comes from understanding the difference between disease and illness. People often use these terms interchangeably, but most health scientists differentiate the two. Disease refers to the process of physical damage within the body, which can exist even in the absence of a label or diagnosis. Illness, on the other hand, refers to the experience of being sick and having a diagnosis of sickness. People

can have a disease and not be ill. For example, people with undiagnosed hypertension, HIV infection, or cancer all have a disease, but they may appear quite healthy and be completely unaware of their disease. Although disease and illness are separate conditions, they often overlap—for example, when a person feels ill and has also received a diagnosis of a specific disease.

People frequently experience physical symptoms, but these symptoms may or may not indicate a disease. Symptoms such as a headache, a painful shoulder, sniffles, or sneezing would probably not prompt a person to seek medical care, but an intense and persistent stomach pain probably would. At what point should a person decide to seek medical care? Errors in both directions are possible. People who decide to go to the doctor when they are not sick feel foolish, must pay the bill for an office visit, and lose credibility with people who know about the error, including the physician. If they choose not to seek medical care, they may get better, but they may also get worse; trying to ignore their symptoms may make treatment more difficult and seriously endanger their health or increase their risk of death. A prudent action would seem to be to chance the unnecessary visit, but people (for a variety of reasons) are often unable or simply reluctant to go to the doctor.



Real-World Profile of **LANCE ARMSTRONG**



William Pengini/Shutterstock.com

Until 2012, Lance Armstrong was a source of inspiration for millions of people worldwide. He overcame a well-publicized battle with testicular cancer and went on to “win” five Tour de France cycling victories. Armstrong later confessed to using performance-enhancing drugs; his victories were erased, and his reputation was instantly tarnished. However, his experience with cancer was what inspired many people and is what makes his story worth telling here.

For most of his life, Armstrong was never accustomed to being unhealthy or out of shape. However, in 1996, his victory in the Tour DuPont worried some of his fans. Instead of pumping his fists in victory as he crossed the finish line, he looked unusually exhausted. His eyes were bloodshot, and his face was flushed. Later that year, he dropped out of the Tour de France after only five days.

Armstrong later confessed that he did not feel well during that year. He lost energy and suffered from coughs and lower-back pain. When these symptoms appeared, he attributed them to either the flu or a hard training season. He told himself at the time, “Suck it up . . . you can’t afford to be tired” (Jenkins & Armstrong, 2001, “Before and After,” paragraph 27).

However, his symptoms did not improve, even after rest. One evening, when he developed a severe headache, Armstrong attributed it to too many margaritas. His vision started to become blurry, but he attributed that to getting older.

Finally, a symptom emerged that he could not ignore: He began coughing up masses of metallic-tasting blood. After the first instance of this symptom, Armstrong called a good friend who happened to be a physician. His friend suggested that Armstrong might only be suffering from a cracked sinus. “Great, so it’s no big deal,” Armstrong replied, apparently relieved (Jenkins & Armstrong, 2001, “Before and After,” paragraph 42).

The next day, Armstrong awoke to find his testicle swollen to the size of an orange. Rather than contact his doctor immediately, Armstrong hopped on his bike for another morning training ride. This time, he could not even manage to sit on the seat. Finally—after his symptoms prevented him doing what he loved most—he set up an appointment with a doctor.

That day, in early October 1996, Armstrong learned that he had stage 3 testicular cancer. Due to his delays in seeking medical attention, Armstrong’s cancer had already spread upward to his lungs, abdomen, and brain. His doctors gave him only a 40% chance of survival, and he finally sought treatment for his cancer. Later, Armstrong confessed: “My dumb*** just ignored symptoms, obvious glaring symptoms, for a long time and it travelled all the way up” (Gibney, 2013).

Why did it take so long for Armstrong to seek care for his symptoms? His health was critical to his professional success. He was wealthy, could afford medical care, and had access to personal physicians and team doctors. Still, Armstrong resisted seeking medical care. He later wrote, “Of course I should have known that something was wrong with me. But athletes, especially cyclists, are in the business of denial. You deny all the aches and pains because you have to in order to finish the race . . . You do not give in to pain” (Jenkins & Armstrong, 2001, “Before and After,” paragraph 21).

In the United States and other Western countries, people are not “officially” ill until they receive a diagnosis from a physician, making physicians the gatekeepers to further health care. Physicians not only *determine* disease by their diagnoses but also *sanction* it by giving

a diagnosis. Hence, the person with symptoms is not the one who officially determines their health status.

Dealing with symptoms occurs in two stages, which Stanislav Kasl and Sidney Cobb (1966a, 1966b) called illness behavior and sick role behavior. **Illness behavior**



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Illness behavior is directed toward determining health status.

consists of the activities undertaken by people who experience symptoms but who have not yet received a diagnosis. That is, illness behavior occurs *before* a diagnosis. People engage in illness behaviors to determine their state of health and to discover suitable remedies. Armstrong was engaging in illness behavior when he sought the opinion of his friend and when he finally made an appointment with a physician. In contrast, **sick role behavior** is the term applied to the behavior of people after a diagnosis, whether from a health care provider or through a self-diagnosis. People engage in sick role behavior to get well. For example, Armstrong exhibited sick role behavior when he underwent surgery and chemotherapy, kept medical appointments, took a break from cycling, and recovered from his treatments. A *diagnosis*, then, is the event that separates illness behavior from sick role behavior.

Illness Behavior

The goal of illness behavior, which takes place before an official diagnosis, is to determine health status in the presence of symptoms. People routinely experience symptoms that may signal disease, such as chest pain, soreness, or headaches. Symptoms are a critical element in seeking medical care, but the presence of symptoms is not sufficient to prompt a visit to the doctor. Given similar symptoms, some people readily seek help, others

do so reluctantly, and still others do not seek help at all. What determines people's decision to seek professional care?

At least six conditions shape people's response to symptoms (see [Table 3.1](#)): (1) personal factors; (2) gender; (3) age; (4) socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural factors; (5) stigma; (6) the characteristics of the symptoms; and (7) the conceptualization of the disease.

Personal Factors Personal factors include a person's way of viewing their own body, their level of stress, and their personality traits. An example comes from people who experience irritable bowel syndrome, an intestinal condition characterized by pain, cramping, constipation, and diarrhea. Stress makes this condition worse. Some people with irritable bowel syndrome seek medical services, whereas many others do not. Interestingly, a person's level of symptoms is *not* the most important reason somebody seeks medical care (Ringström et al., 2007). Instead, a person typically seeks medical care because of anxiety concerning the condition, coping resources, and their level of physical functioning. Those who have adequate resources to cope with the symptoms and feel that the quality of their lives is not too impaired do not seek medical care. These psychological factors are more important than the prominence of symptoms in determining who seeks medical care.

TABLE 3.1 Factors that Relate to Health Care Seeking

Factor	Findings	Studies
1. Personal factors	Stress, anxiety, and neuroticism all predict greater health care seeking.	Martin & Brantley, 2004; Friedman et al., 2013
2. Gender	Women tend to seek health care more than men.	Galdas et al., 2005; Svendsen et al., 2013.
3. Age	Young adults delay seeking health care, and older adults delay when symptoms appear to be due to aging.	Ryan & Zerwic, 2003.
4. Socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural factors	People lower in socioeconomic status and ethnic minorities are less likely to seek health care.	Martins et al., 2013.
5. Stigma	People with embarrassing or stigmatized conditions are less likely to seek care.	Alberga et al., 2019; Barth et al., 2002; Carter-Harris et al., 2014; Lerner et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2014; Whitehead et al., 2016
6. Symptom characteristics	Symptoms that are visible, are perceived as severe, interfere with life, and are continuous are more likely to prompt seeking care.	Irwin et al., 2008; Quinn, 2005; Unger-Saldaña & Infante-Castañeda, 2011; Urbane et al., 2019.

Stress is another personal factor in people's readiness to seek care. People who experience a great deal of stress are more likely to seek health care than those under less stress, even with equal symptoms. Those who experience current or ongoing stress are more likely to seek care when symptoms are ambiguous (Cameron, Leventhal, & Leventhal, 1995; Martin & Brantley, 2004). Ironically, other people are *less* likely to view somebody as having a disease if the person also complains about stress, as others tend to perceive symptoms that coincide with stress as not real. This misperception may affect women more than men; women under high stress are judged as less likely to have a physical disease than men in the same circumstances (Chiaromonte & Friend, 2006). This may be particularly true for male physicians who are less likely than female physicians to recommend cardiac testing for women who complain of chest pain (Napoli, Choo, & McGregor, 2014). This tendency to discount symptoms may be an important factor in the treatment of women who experience symptoms and for the health care providers who hear their reports.

Personality traits also contribute to illness behavior. In a unique and interesting study headed by Sheldon Cohen (Feldman et al., 1999), investigators administered a common cold virus to a group of healthy

volunteers to see if participants with different personality traits would report symptoms differently. Participants who scored high on **neuroticism**—that is, those with strong and often negative emotional reactions—generally had high self-reports of illness regardless of whether objective evidence confirmed their reports. These people also reported more symptoms than other participants, suggesting that people high in the personality trait of neuroticism are more likely to complain of an illness. Not surprisingly, then, people high in neuroticism are more likely to seek medical care than those low in neuroticism (Friedman et al., 2013).

Gender Differences In addition to personal factors, gender plays a role in the decision to seek treatment, with women more likely than men to use health care (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005). The reasons for this difference are somewhat complex. Women tend to report more body symptoms and distress than men (Koopmans & Lamers, 2007). When asked about their symptoms, men tend to report only life-threatening situations, such as heart disease (Benyamini, Leventhal, & Leventhal, 2000). In contrast, women report these symptoms as well as non-life-threatening symptoms, such as those from joint disease. Given the same level

of symptoms, the female gender role may make it easier for women to seek many sorts of assistance, whereas the male gender role teaches men to act strong and to deny pain and discomfort (as Armstrong did). Indeed, men are more likely than women to delay seeking health care for symptoms that might indicate cancer (Svendsen et al., 2013).

Age Young adults feel healthy and indestructible, and as such, they show the greatest reluctance to see a health professional. However, as young adults age, they are more likely to seek care for health complaints. Why? As you might imagine, age is inextricably tied to both the development of physical symptoms as well as to people's interpretations of those symptoms.

As people age, they must decide whether their symptoms are due to aging or the result of disease. This distinction is not always easy, as Armstrong incorrectly attributed his blurred vision to aging rather than to the cancer that had invaded his brain. In general, people tend to interpret problems with a gradual onset and mild symptoms as resulting from age, whereas they are more ready to see problems with a sudden onset and severe symptoms as being more serious. For example, when older patients with symptoms of acute myocardial infarction can attribute these symptoms to age, they tend to delay seeking medical care. One study (Ryan & Zerwic, 2003) looked at patients who failed to realize that a delay in seeking health care could bring about more severe symptoms as well as an increased chance of mortality. Compared with younger and middle-aged patients, these older people were more likely to (1) attribute their symptoms to age, (2) experience more severe and lengthy symptoms, (3) attribute their symptoms to some other disorder, and (4) have had previous experience with cardiac problems. Thus, people may be less willing to seek help for symptoms that they view as simply a natural part of aging.

Socioeconomic, Ethnic, and Cultural Factors People from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds have disparate ways of viewing illness and different patterns of seeking medical care. In the United States, people in higher socioeconomic groups experience fewer symptoms and report a higher level of health than people at lower socioeconomic levels (Matthews & Gallo, 2011; Stone et al., 2010). Yet when higher-income people are sick, they are more likely to seek medical care. Nevertheless, poor people are over-represented among the hospitalized, an indication that they are much more

likely than middle- and upper-income people to become seriously ill. In addition, people in lower socioeconomic groups tend to wait longer before seeking health care, thus making treatment more difficult and hospitalization more likely. The poor have less access to medical care, must travel longer to reach health care facilities that will offer them treatment, and must wait longer once they arrive at those facilities. Thus, poor people utilize medical care less than wealthier people; when poor people do utilize medical care, their illnesses are typically more severe.

Ethnic background is another factor in seeking health care, with European Americans being more likely than other groups to report a visit to a physician. Part of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (Harris, 2001) examined some of the reasons behind these ethnic differences, comparing European Americans, African Americans, and Mexican Americans with type 2 diabetes on access to and use of health care facilities. Ethnic differences appeared in health insurance coverage as well as in common risk factors for diabetes and heart disease. Similarly, ethnic differences in insurance coverage account for ethnic differences in the use of dental health care (Doty & Weech-Maldonado, 2003). However, even in countries where access to health care is not dependent on private health insurance, ethnic minorities tend to show longer delays until diagnosis for cancer-related symptoms (Martins, Hamilton, & Ukoumunne, 2013).

A study from the United Kingdom confirmed the notion that culture and ethnic background—not lack of knowledge—are primarily responsible for differences in seeking medical care. In this study (Adamson et al., 2003), researchers sent questionnaires to a large, diverse group of participants. Each questionnaire included two clinical vignettes showing (1) people experiencing signs of chest pain and (2) people discovering a lump in their armpit. The experimenters asked each participant to respond to the chest pain and the lump in terms of needing immediate care. Results indicated that respondents who were Black, female, and from lower socioeconomic groups were at least as likely as those who were White, male, and from middle- and upper-class groups to make accurate responses to potential medical problems. That is, poor Black women do not lack information about the potential health hazards of chest pain or a lump in the armpit but they are more likely to lack the resources to respond quickly to these symptoms. Ethnic minorities are also more likely to experience discrimination in

their everyday lives; those who perceive discrimination are less likely to utilize the health care system (Burgess et al., 2008).

Stigma Some people may neglect seeking help for medical problems because of stigma. Stigma may occur because a person is embarrassed about the condition itself or because the person is embarrassed about the way they may have contracted the condition. Indeed, stigma tends to delay seeking health care for conditions that may be a source of embarrassment, such as incontinence (Wang et al., 2014), sexually transmitted diseases (Barth et al., 2002), or obesity (Alberga et al., 2019). Even stigma associated with a person's identity may cause some people to avoid seeking health care, as has been observed among sexual minority individuals living in rural areas and transgender individuals (Lerner & Robles, 2017; Whitehead, Shaver, & Stephenson, 2016). Stigma may also prevent some people, particularly smokers, from seeking care for symptoms related to lung cancer. In one study, people who perceived greater stigma associated with lung cancer waited longer to seek care for initial symptoms of lung cancer (Carter-Harris et al., 2014). Stigma associated with lung cancer may be a particular issue for smokers, as smokers are less likely than non-smokers to seek help for symptoms that might indicate lung cancer (Smith, Whitaker, Winstanley, & Wardle, 2016), possibly because of fears of negative evaluations from physicians or being blamed for the disease.

Symptom Characteristics Symptom characteristics also influence when and how people look for help. Symptoms do not inevitably lead people to seek care, but certain characteristics are important in responding

to symptoms. David Mechanic (1978) listed four characteristics of the symptoms that determine people's response to disease.

First is the *visibility of the symptom*—that is, how readily apparent the symptom is to the person and to others. Many of Armstrong's symptoms were not visible to others, including his enlarged testes. In a study of Mexican women who had symptoms of possible breast cancer, those whose symptoms were more visible were more likely to seek medical help (Unger-Saldaña & Infante-Castañeda, 2011). Unfortunately, with many diseases such as breast cancer or testicular cancer, the condition may be worse, and treatment options may be more limited once symptoms become visible.

Mechanic's second symptom characteristic is *perceived severity of the symptom*. According to Mechanic, symptoms seen as severe would be more likely to prompt action than less severe symptoms. Armstrong did not seek immediate medical care partially because he did not see some of his symptoms as serious—he viewed them as the result of the flu or his exhausting training regimen. The perceived severity of the symptom highlights the importance of personal perception and distinguishes between the perceived severity of a symptom and the judgment of severity by medical authorities. Indeed, patients and physicians differ in their perceptions of the severity of a wide variety of symptoms (Peay & Peay, 1998). Symptoms that patients perceive as more serious produce greater concern and a stronger belief that treatment is urgently needed. The emergence of COVID-19, for example, led people to interpret symptoms such as a fever, cough, and sore throat as more serious than they would have interpreted them prior to the awareness of COVID-19. Parents seek medical attention for a child's fever when they perceive a fever as having potentially serious consequences (Urbane et al., 2019). Similarly, women who interpreted symptoms as indicative of cardiac problems sought care more quickly than women who interpreted their symptoms as some other condition (Quinn, 2005). Thus, the perceived severity of symptoms, rather than the actual presence of symptoms, is critical in the decision to seek care.

The third symptom characteristic mentioned by Mechanic is the *extent to which the symptom interferes with a person's life*. The more incapacitated the person, the more likely they are to seek medical care. Studies on irritable bowel syndrome (Ringström et al., 2007) and overactive bladder (Irwin et al., 2008) illustrate this principle; those who seek medical care report a poorer health quality of life than those who do not seek medical



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People are more likely to seek care for symptoms that are visible to others.

care. Armstrong sought attention for his cancer-related symptoms only when they interfered with his ability to ride his bicycle.

Mechanic's fourth hypothesized determinant of illness behavior is the *frequency and persistence of the symptoms*. Conditions that people view as requiring care tend to be those that are both severe and continuous, whereas intermittent symptoms are less likely to generate illness behavior. Severe symptoms—such as coughing up blood, as Armstrong experienced—prompt people to seek help. However, even mild symptoms can motivate people to seek help if those symptoms persist.

In Mechanic's description and subsequent research, symptom characteristics alone are not sufficient to prompt illness behavior. However, if symptoms persist or are perceived as severe, people are more likely to evaluate them as indicating a need for care. Thus, people seek care not based on their objective symptoms but rather on the basis of their *interpretation* of their symptoms, highlighting the key role that beliefs and perceptions play in the process of seeking health care.

Conceptualization of Disease Most people are not experts in physiology or medicine and are largely unaware of how their body works and how disease develops. People think about diseases in ways that vary substantially from medical explanations. For example, both children (Veldtman et al., 2001) and college students (Nemeroff, 1995) show inaccurate and incomplete understandings of diseases when they describe diseases they have and how they became ill. For example, in one study, college students thought that symptoms of the flu would be less serious if they contracted the virus from a lover rather than from someone they despised (Nemeroff, 1995)! (A virus is a virus regardless of how you get it.) Thus, people may seek (or not seek) medical care based on their incomplete and sometimes inaccurate beliefs about health and illness.

What are the important ways in which people conceptualize, or think about, diseases? Howard Leventhal and his colleagues (Leventhal et al., 2010; Leventhal, Leventhal, & Cameron, 2001; Martin & Leventhal, 2004) have looked at five components in the conceptualization process: (1) the identity of the disease, (2) the timeline (the time course of both disease and treatment), (3) the cause of the disease, (4) the consequences of the disease, and (5) the controllability of the disease. Because most people are not medical experts, their beliefs about these components may not always be

accurate. Yet, these beliefs have important implications for how people seek care and manage a disease.

The *identity of the disease*, the first component identified by Leventhal and his colleagues, is very important to illness behavior. People who have identified their symptoms as a “heart attack” should (Martin & Leventhal, 2004) and do (Quinn, 2005) react quite differently from those who label the same symptoms as “heart-burn.” As we have seen, the presence of symptoms is not sufficient to initiate help seeking, but the labeling that occurs in conjunction with symptoms may be critical in a person's either seeking help or ignoring symptoms.

Labels provide a framework within which people can recognize and interpret symptoms. In one study, Leventhal and his team gave young adults a blood pressure test and randomly assigned them to receive one of two results: high blood pressure or normal blood pressure (Baumann et al., 1989). Compared with the young adults who received results indicating normal blood pressure, those who received results indicating high blood pressure were more likely to subsequently report other symptoms related to hypertension. In other words, the label made them report other symptoms consistent with their diagnosis.

People experience less emotional arousal when they find a label that indicates a minor problem (heart-burn rather than heart attack). Initially, they will probably adopt the least serious label that fits their symptoms. For example, Armstrong interpreted headaches as hangovers and blurred vision as a normal part of aging. Armstrong—as well as his physician friend—also preferred to interpret his blood-expelling coughs as a sinus problem rather than something more severe. To a large extent, a label carries with it some prediction about the symptoms and time course of the disease. So if the symptoms and time course do not correspond to the expectation implied by the label, then the person must relabel the symptoms. When a swollen testicle became another prominent symptom, Armstrong quickly realized that he had more than merely a sinus problem. Thus, the tendency to interpret symptoms as indicating minor rather than major problems is the source of many optimistic self-diagnoses, of which Armstrong's is an example.

The second component in conceptualizing an illness is the *timeline*. Even though a diagnosis usually implies a disease's time course, people's understanding of the time involved is not necessarily accurate. People with a chronic disorder often view their disease as acute and of short duration. For example, patients with heart disease

(a chronic disorder) may see their disease as “heartburn,” an acute disorder (Martin & Leventhal, 2004). With most acute diseases, patients can expect a temporary disorder with a quick onset of symptoms, followed by treatment, a remission of symptoms, and then a cure. In fact, people who conceptualize their illness as an acute disorder tend to manage their symptoms better (Horne et al., 2004). Unfortunately, this scenario does not fit many diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes, which are chronic and persist over a lifetime. In a study of adults with diabetes, those who conceptualized their illness as acute rather than chronic managed their illness worse, likely because they took medications only when acute symptoms were present (Mann et al., 2009). However, conceptualizing a chronic disease as time-limited may provide patients with some psychological comfort; patients who conceptualize their cancer as chronic report greater distress than those who view the disease as an acute illness (Rabin, Leventhal, & Goodin, 2004).

The third component in conceptualizing an illness is the *determination of cause*. For the most part, determining causality is more a part of the sick role than of illness behavior because it usually occurs after a diagnosis has been made. But the attribution of causality for symptoms is an important factor in illness behavior. For example, if a person can attribute the pain in his hand to a blow received the day before, he will not have to consider the possibility of bone cancer as the cause of the pain.

Attribution of causality, however, is often faulty. People may attribute a cold to “germs” or to the weather, and they may see cancer as caused by microwave ovens or by God’s will. These conceptualizations have important implications for illness behavior. People are less likely to seek professional treatment for conditions that they consider as having emotional or spiritual causes. Culture may also play a role in attributions of causes for diseases. Cultural differences appeared in a study that compared Britons’ and Taiwanese beliefs about heart disease: Britons were more likely to see heart disease as caused by lifestyle choices, whereas Taiwanese participants were more likely to see heart disease as caused by worry and stress (Lin et al., 2009). It is reasonable to expect that someone who views heart disease as due to lifestyle will manage the illness differently than someone who views it as due to stress. Therefore, people’s conceptualizations of disease causality can influence their behavior.

The *consequences of a disease* are the fourth component in Leventhal’s description of illness. Even though

the consequences of a disease are implied by the diagnosis, an incorrect understanding of the consequences can have a profound effect on illness behavior. Many people view a diagnosis of cancer as a death sentence. Some neglect health care because they believe themselves to be in a hopeless situation. Women who find a lump in their breast sometimes delay making an appointment with a doctor, not because they fail to recognize this symptom of cancer but because they fear the possible consequences—surgery and possibly the loss of a breast, chemotherapy, radiation, or some combination of these consequences. Similarly, a person’s reaction to a positive COVID-19 test will likely differ based on their beliefs about possible consequences; an older person with multiple preexisting risk factors that may increase their chance of hospitalization or death will react much differently than a younger person with no other risk factors.

A disease’s *controllability* refers to people’s belief that they can control the course of their illness by controlling the treatment or the disease. People who believe that their behaviors will not change the course of a disease are more distressed by their illness and less likely to seek treatment than those who believe that treatment will be effective (Evans & Norman, 2009; Hagger & Orbell, 2003). However, people who can control the symptoms of their disease without medical consultation will be less likely to seek professional medical care (Ringström et al., 2007).

In sum, the five beliefs in Leventhal’s model predict several important outcomes, including distress, seeking health care, and disease management. Can changing these beliefs improve health outcomes? A study of asthma sufferers suggests that these components can be useful targets for intervention (Petrie et al., 2012). In this study, researchers sent some asthma patients periodic text messages that accurately informed the patients of the identity, timeline, cause, consequences, and controllability of asthma. Compared with a control group, patients who received the text message intervention reported more accurate beliefs about their asthma, as well as much better management of their condition. Thus, the five beliefs in Leventhal’s model are useful to understand why some people behave not only in unhealthy ways but also as targets for intervention to improve self-management.

The Sick Role

Kasl and Cobb (1966b) defined sick role behavior as the activities engaged in by people who believe themselves

ill for the purpose of getting well. In other words, sick role behavior occurs after a person receives a diagnosis. Alexander Segall (1997) expanded this concept, proposing that the sick role concept includes three rights (or *privileges*) and three duties (or *responsibilities*). The privileges are (1) the right to make decisions concerning health-related issues, (2) the right to be exempt from normal duties, and (3) the right to become dependent on others for assistance. The three responsibilities are (1) the duty to maintain health along with the responsibility to get well, (2) the duty to perform routine health care management, and (3) the duty to use a range of health care resources.

Segall's formulation of rights and duties is an ideal—not a realistic—conception of sick role behavior in the United States. The first right—to make decisions concerning health-related issues—does not extend to children and many people living in poverty (Bailis et al., 2001). The second feature of the sick role is the exemption of the sick person from normal duties. Sick people are usually not expected to go to work, attend school, go to meetings, cook meals, clean house, care for children, do homework, or mow the lawn. However, meeting these expectations is not always possible. Many sick people neither stay home nor go to the hospital but continue to go to work. People who feel in danger of losing their jobs are more likely to go to work when they are sick (Bloor, 2005), but so do those who experience good working relationships with their colleagues and are dedicated to their jobs (Biron et al., 2006). Similarly, the third privilege—to be dependent on others—is more of an ideal than a reflection of reality. For example, sick mothers often must continue to be responsible for their children.

Segall's three duties of sick people all fall under the single obligation to do whatever is necessary to get well. However, the goal of getting well applies more to acute than to chronic diseases. People with chronic diseases will never be completely well. This situation presents a conflict for many people with a chronic disease, who have difficulty accepting their condition as one of continuing disability; instead, they erroneously believe that their disease is a temporary state.

IN SUMMARY

No easy distinction exists between health and illness. The WHO sees health as more than the absence of disease; rather, health is the attainment of positive physical, mental, and social well-being. Curiously, the distinction between disease and

illness is clearer. Disease refers to the process of physical damage within the body, whether the person is aware of this damage. Illness, on the other hand, refers to the experience of being sick; people can feel sick but have no identifiable disease.

At least six factors determine how people respond to illness symptoms: (1) personal factors, such as the way people look upon their own body, their stress, and their personality; (2) gender—women are more likely than men to seek professional care; (3) age—older people attribute many ailments to their age; (4) ethnic and cultural factors—people who cannot afford medical care are more likely than affluent people to become ill but less likely to seek health care; (5) stigma—people often delay seeking care for conditions that are shameful or embarrassing; (6) symptoms' characteristics—symptoms that interfere with daily activities as well as visible, severe, and frequent symptoms are most likely to prompt medical attention; and (7) people's conceptualization of disease.

People tend to incorporate five components into their concept of disease: (1) the identity of the disease, (2) the timeline of the disease, (3) the cause of the disease, (4) the consequences of the disease, and (5) the controllability of the disease. If a patient receives a diagnosis of a disease, the diagnosis implies its time course and its consequences. However, people who know the name of their disease do not always have an accurate concept of its time course and consequence and may wrongly see a chronic disease as having a short time course. People want to know the cause of their illness and to understand how they can control it, but beliefs that an illness is uncontrollable may lead people to neglect treatment.

After receiving a diagnosis, people engage in sick role behavior to get well. People who are sick should be relieved from normal responsibilities and should have the obligation of trying to get well. However, these rights and duties are difficult and often impossible to fulfill.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Develop a profile of a person who is likely to seek medical attention, and another profile of a person who is likely to avoid or delay seeking medical attention.

3-2 Seeking Medical Information from Nonmedical Sources

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 3-4** Recognize the nonmedical sources that people often turn to get medical information

After people notice symptoms that they perceive as being a potential problem, they must decide whether and how to seek help. People's first step in seeking health care, however, is often not to seek help from a doctor. Instead, people often turn to two more easily accessible sources—the Internet and their lay referral network.

The Internet

In recent years, the Internet has become an additional source of information for people who seek information and help with symptoms. During the initial weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the first media reports of a coronavirus infection in a particular U.S. state led to an immediate increase in Internet searches about coronavirus within that state (Bento et al., 2020). Within a few weeks, however, the Internet searches subsided, suggesting that the Internet was one of the first places people turned to learn about this new health threat. Indeed, a majority of Internet users in the United States report using the Internet to search for health information for themselves (Atkinson, Saperstein, & Pleis, 2009) or for other people (Sadasivam et al., 2013), often as the first source (Jacobs, Amuta, & Jeon, 2017). Women and those with higher education are more likely than others to use the Internet for this purpose (McCully, Don, & Updegraff, 2013; Powell et al., 2011). In fact, public health researchers can use sudden increases in the number of Internet searches about specific disease symptoms to reliably identify outbreaks of infectious diseases in near real time (Ginsberg et al., 2009)!

The Internet is a common source of health information because it satisfies several motivations, such as seeking a greater understanding of a health issue, getting a second opinion, seeking reassurance, and overcoming difficulties in getting health information through other

sources (Amante et al., 2015; Powell et al., 2011). However, not everybody has easy access to the Internet, so the elderly, those with low income, lower education, and some ethnic minorities may not have access to online health information (Jacobs et al., 2017). Furthermore, increased Internet access opens a vast source of medical information *and* misinformation to the public (Wald, Dube, & Anthony, 2007) (see “Would You Believe . . .?” box). For example, in the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic when much about the coronavirus was unknown, a vast majority of websites that reported about the virus did not meet clear criteria for accuracy and reliability (Cuan-Baltazar et al., 2020). Thus, one of the challenges that Internet users face is how to distinguish trustworthy websites from those that are simply trying to sell health products or deliberately providing misinformation. Many people use Wikipedia as a primary source of health information (Laurent & Vickers, 2009), even though the information on Wikipedia may not be as accurate as other sources. Excellent and credible sources of health information include the Center for Advancing Health website (www.cfah.org) and the National Institutes of Health website (health.nih.gov). Chapter 2 also includes helpful tips on how to identify valid health information on the Internet.

Patients who go to the web for information become more active in their health care, but this knowledge may decrease physicians' authority and change the nature of the physician–patient relationship. When patients bring information to the physician that the physician views as accurate and relevant, then the relationship can benefit (Murray et al., 2003). However, when the patient brings inaccurate or irrelevant information, it can deteriorate the relationship and challenge the physician's authority. Many patients are reluctant to bring up Internet health information with their providers out of fear of challenging the provider (Imes et al., 2008). Thus, the Internet is an important source of health information, and patients who do not have access to accurate and relevant information may not be in a good position to be effective users of the medical system (Hall & Schneider, 2008).

Lay Referral Network

When Armstrong finally decided to seek advice about his symptoms, he did not immediately go to a specialist. Instead, he consulted his friends, one of whom happened to be a physician. Armstrong's friends were part of his **lay referral network**, a network of family and friends who offer information and advice before any

Would You BELIEVE...?

There Is Controversy about Childhood Vaccinations

In 1980, prior to widespread vaccination for measles, the contagious virus killed approximately 2.6 million people each year. Following widespread vaccination, measles-related deaths have declined to the point that few people in developed countries are aware of measles. However, measles-related deaths still occur in regions where vaccination rates are low. In fact, measles remains the leading cause of vaccine-preventable death among children worldwide.

Why, then, is vaccination for measles such an emotionally charged and controversial issue for many people? Why do many parents feel it is safer to *not* immunize their children? How did this controversy arise, and why might it continue?

The controversy began in 1998 when Andrew Wakefield published a study about 12 children who experienced the sudden onset of gastrointestinal problems and autism-related symptoms (Wakefield et al., 1998, later retracted). Parents or doctors of 8 of those 12 children stated that the symptoms started soon after the child received the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccination.

Children typically receive the first dose of an MMR vaccination in their first two years of life. This is also the time when parents or doctors usually start noticing symptoms of autism in children. Thus, it is expected that some parents would observe symptoms of autism develop around the same time as an MMR vaccination. If some parents notice this *correlation*, it may be easy for them to conclude that the vaccination *caused* autism.

Did the MMR vaccine cause autism among 8 of the 12 children in Wakefield's study? Wakefield's study raised this question, but it was a

small study of a dozen children, and after investigation, serious questions about the validity of Wakefield's data were raised and the study was retracted. Spurred by the controversy of Wakefield's paper, nearly a dozen large epidemiological studies have tackled this question, including one that examined over 500,000 children (Madsen et al., 2002). None of these later studies found *any* evidence that children who receive an MMR vaccination show higher risk for autism than those who do not. If Wakefield's study of 12 children detected a valid association between vaccination and autism, then surely a study of half a million children should find the same association as well. But it, and many other studies, did not.

Why, then, do questions about the safety of vaccinations persist? Several explanations exist. First, some of most outspoken anti-vaccination critics are celebrities with a high degree of media exposure, such as Jim Carrey and Jenny McCarthy (whose own son was diagnosed with autism). Second, the exact cause of autism is unknown, and no cure currently exists. When medical research offers few answers, people often look to nonmedical sources, the Internet, and social media for answers.

The Internet and social media can be sources of both information and misinformation. One study found that *less than half* of the websites resulting from a Google search of "Is there a link between MMR and autism?" provided scientifically accurate answers to the question (Sculard, Peacock, & Davies, 2010). Social media sites—such as Facebook or blogs—offer emotional accounts of personal experiences with vaccinations or autism, which most often

focus on perceived harms of vaccines (Betsch et al., 2012). Decades of research in the field of persuasion show that personal stories and narratives are more engaging and powerful—regardless of accuracy—than drier, more scientifically based information. Thus, for a parent searching for information about MMR vaccination, the Internet and other media outlets may be powerful sources of misinformation. Furthermore, people tend to seek out information that confirms—rather than disconfirms—their beliefs, making people resistant to new information that contradicts their views.

This misinformation may lead many parents to forego vaccination for their children. When vaccination rates decrease, the public is at increased risk for contracting measles. In fact, for a highly contagious virus such as measles, 90% to 95% of a population needs to be vaccinated for the population to avoid exposure to the disease. Even small decreases in vaccination rates can lead to outbreaks of a disease, as occurred in 2015, during which nearly 150 visitors to an amusement park in California contracted measles. This outbreak was likely due to a single person contracting measles overseas and unknowingly transmitted it to others who were not vaccinated.

Thus, the controversy over childhood vaccinations highlights many key issues in seeking out medical information, including the persuasive power of anecdotal information over results from large-scale studies, people's need to find answers when few are available, as well as the difficulty that people often have in changing firmly held views in the face of new information.

official medical treatment is sought (Friedson, 1961; Suls, Martin, & Leventhal, 1997). Like Armstrong, most people who seek health care do so because of prior conversations with friends and family about symptoms (Cornford & Cornford, 1999). When people have access to the Internet, it is usually the first source of health information; for those who do not have such access, the lay referral network is a more common source of information (Jacobs et al., 2017). In the study of irritable bowel syndrome (Ringström et al., 2007), about half of those who did not seek medical care sought alternative care or the advice of someone with the same condition. Thus, most people sought help but not necessarily from a physician.

The lay referral network can help people understand the meaning of symptoms, such as what its label, cause, and cure might be. A lay referral network can also prime a person's perception of symptoms. A woman with chest pain, for example, would react quite differently if her family had a history of heart attacks compared with one of heartburn. In some cases, people in the lay referral network might advise *against* seeking medical care, particularly if they can recommend simple home remedies or complementary and alternative treatments (see Chapter 8 for a review of complementary and alternative therapies). Thus, people's social networks are often a primary source of information and advice on health matters but may not always encourage people to seek traditional medical care (Dimsdale et al., 1979).

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Consider the reasons why people often turn to non-medical sources for health information and what the potential benefits and drawbacks are in turning to nonmedical sources.

3-3 Receiving Medical Care

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 3-5** Recognize the role of employment and insurance coverage in receiving medical care in the United States, as well as the reasons why some people may seek care from nonmedical or alternative sources

- 3-6** Identify the characteristics of practitioners and patients that may make interactions difficult and those that may help medical interactions
- 3-7** Recognize the challenges that hospital patients may face
- 3-8** Identify several techniques that help children cope when receiving medical treatment

Most people have experience in receiving medical care. In some situations, this experience may be satisfying. In other situations, people may face challenges in receiving care; these problems include having only limited access to medical care, choosing the right practitioner, and being in the hospital.

Limited Access to Medical Care

The cost of medical care prevents many people from receiving proper treatment and care. This limited access to medical care is more restricted in the United States than in other industrialized nations (Weitz, 2010). Many countries have developed national health insurance or other plans for universal coverage, but the United States has typically resisted this strategy. Hospitalization and complex medical treatments are so expensive that most people cannot afford these services. This situation has led to the rise and development of health insurance, which people may purchase as individuals but more often obtain as part of workplace groups offering coverage to their members.

Individual insurance tends to be expensive and offer less coverage, especially for people with health problems. However, these individuals may be able to get some insurance as part of a workplace group. Thus, employment is an important factor in access to medical care in the United States. People who are unemployed or whose jobs do not offer the benefit of health insurance are often uninsured, a situation describing about 11% of U.S. citizens (NCHS, 2019). Those who are single, Native American, Hispanic, or Latino are even more likely to be uninsured. However, even insured people may face barriers to receiving care; their policies often fail to cover services such as dental care, mental health services, and eyeglasses, forcing people to pay these expenses out of their own pockets or forego these services. For insured people who experience a catastrophic illness, coverage may be inadequate for many expenses,

creating enormous medical costs. Indeed, medical costs are the underlying cause for nearly 60% of all personal bankruptcies in the United States (Himmelstein et al., 2019).

The problem of providing medical care for those who cannot afford to pay for these services was a concern throughout the 20th century in the United States (Weitz, 2010). In response to these concerns, the U.S. Congress created two programs in 1965—Medicare and Medicaid. Medicare pays hospital expenses for most Americans over the age of 65, and thus few people in this age group are without hospitalization insurance. Medicare also offers medical insurance that those who participate may purchase for a monthly fee, but many expenses, such as routine dental care, are not covered. Medicaid provides health care based on low income and physical problems, such as disability or pregnancy. These restrictions make many poor people ineligible for receiving coverage; only about half of people living in poverty receive coverage through Medicaid (NCHS, 2021). Children may be eligible for health insurance, even if their parents are not, through the State Children's Health Insurance Program.

People with low incomes struggle to obtain insurance coverage, but even those with insurance may face barriers such as finding a provider who will accept their plan and the out-of-pocket cost of services (Carrillo et al., 2011; DeVoe et al., 2007). The uninsured face more restrictions. These people are less likely to have

regular physicians, more likely to have chronic health problems, and less likely to seek medical care because of the costs (Finkelstein et al., 2011; Pauly & Pagán, 2007). This reluctance has consequences for the management of their diseases. People with chronic diseases and without health insurance have poorly controlled conditions, difficulty in obtaining medications, more health crises, and a higher risk of mortality than people with insurance (McWilliams, 2009). In addition, a high proportion of people without insurance may create a spillover effect in which those with insurance experience higher costs and poorer quality of care. Thus, health insurance is an important issue in the access to medical care and plays a role in choosing a practitioner.

Choosing a Practitioner

As part of their attempts to get well, sick people usually consult a health care practitioner. Physicians, beginning during the 19th century, became the dominant medical providers (Weitz, 2010). Most middle- and upper-class people in industrialized nations seek the services of a physician. Toward the end of the 20th century, however, medical dominance began to decline, and other types of health care providers' popularity rose. For example, midwives, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, psychologists, osteopaths, chiropractors, dentists, nutritionists, and herbal healers all provide various types of health care.



Mark Richard/PhotoEdit

Cost and accessibility of services present barriers to obtaining health care.

Some of these sources of health care are considered “alternative” because they provide alternatives to conventional medical care. Almost a third of U.S. residents seeking conventional health care also use some form of alternative health care, and nearly everyone (96%) who uses alternative health care also uses conventional health care (Weitz, 2010). Some people who consult practitioners such as herbal healers do so because these healers are part of a cultural tradition, such as *curanderos* in Latin American culture. However, the recent growth of alternative medicine has come mainly from well-educated people who are dissatisfied with standard medical care and who hold attitudes that are compatible with the alternative care they seek (Weitz, 2010). Well-educated people are more likely to turn to alternative medicine because they are better able to pay for this care, which is less likely to be covered by insurance than conventional care.

People without health insurance are less likely to have a regular health care provider than are those with insurance (Pauly & Pagán, 2007). People who do not have health insurance may receive care from convenient care clinics or hospital emergency rooms, even for chronic conditions. Convenient care clinics offer basic health care, primarily by physicians’ assistants and nurse practitioners (Hanson-Turton et al., 2007). Seeking care through the emergency room may result in people receiving care only after their condition meets the definition of an emergency. Thus, these patients are sicker than they might have been if they had easier access to care. In addition, seeking care from emergency rooms is more expensive and overburdens these facilities, decreasing their ability to provide care to those with acute conditions.

Practitioner–Patient Interaction The interaction between a patient and a practitioner is an important consideration in receiving medical care. Practitioners who are successful in forming a working alliance with their patients are more likely to have patients who are satisfied (Fuertes et al., 2007). A satisfying patient–practitioner relationship offers important practical benefits: Satisfied patients are more likely to follow medical advice (Fuertes et al., 2007), more likely to continue to use medical services and obtain checkups, and less likely to file complaints against their practitioners (Stelfox et al., 2005). Important factors in building successful practitioner–patient alliances include verbal communication and the practitioner’s personal characteristics.

Verbal Communication Poor verbal communication is perhaps the most crucial factor in practitioner–patient interaction (Cutting Edge Information, 2004). In fact, patients are significantly less likely to follow a practitioner’s medical advice when the practitioner communicates poorly (Ratanawongsa et al., 2013; Zolnieriek & DiMatteo, 2009). Communication problems may arise when physicians ask patients to report on their symptoms but fail to listen to patients’ concerns, interrupting their stories within seconds (Galland, 2006). What constitutes a concern for the patient may not be essential to the diagnostic process, and the practitioner may simply be trying to elicit information relevant to making a diagnosis. However, patients may misinterpret the physician’s behavior as a lack of personal concern or as overlooking what patients consider important symptoms. After practitioners have made a diagnosis, they typically tell patients about that diagnosis. If the diagnosis is minor, patients may be relieved and not highly motivated to adhere to (or even listen to) any instructions that may follow. If the verdict is serious, patients may become anxious or frightened, and these feelings may then interfere with their concentration on subsequent medical advice. The patient–practitioner interaction is especially important at this juncture; when patients do not receive information that they have requested, they feel less satisfied with their physician and are less likely to comply with the advice they receive (Bell et al., 2002). However, when patients believe that physicians understand their reasons for seeking treatment and that both agree about treatment, they are more likely to comply with medical advice (Kerse et al., 2004).

For a variety of reasons, physicians and patients frequently do not speak the same language. First, physicians operate in familiar territory: They know the subject matter, are comfortable with the physical surroundings, and are ordinarily calm and relaxed with procedures that have become routine to them. Patients, in contrast, are often unfamiliar with medical terminology (Castro et al., 2007), are distracted by the strange environment, and are distressed by anxiety, fear, or pain (Charlee et al., 1996). In some cases, practitioners and patients do not speak the same language—literally. Differences in native language present a major barrier to communication (Blanchard & Lurie, 2004; Flores, 2006). Even with interpreters, substantial miscommunication may occur (Rosenberg, Leanza, & Seller, 2007). As a result, patients either fail to understand or to remember significant portions of the information their doctors give them.



Chad Baker/Jason Flead/Ryan McVay/Getty Images

Communication is important for compliance, and female physicians tend to encourage interaction and communication.

The Practitioner's Personal Characteristics A second aspect of the practitioner–patient interaction is the physician's perceived personal characteristics. When people have the freedom to choose their practitioners, they value technical competence (Bendapudi et al., 2006). However, because most patients lack medical training of their own, patients have difficulty judging the technical competence of practitioners. Instead, they often base their judgments of technical quality on a practitioner's personal characteristics. Behaviors that differentiate practitioners whom patients rate as providing excellent treatment include being confident, thorough, personable, humane, forthright, respectful, and empathetic. Female physicians are more likely to show these behaviors than male physicians. Two meta-analyses covering nearly 35 years of research (Hall, Blanch-Hartigan, & Roter, 2011; Roter & Hall, 2004) showed that female physicians were more patient centered, spent 10% more time with patients, employed more partnership behaviors, were more positive in their communication, engaged in more psychosocial counseling, asked more questions, used more emotionally focused talk, and were evaluated more highly by patients than male physicians. Moreover, the patients of female physicians were more

likely to disclose more information about their medical symptoms as well as their psychological concerns. This research suggests that a person, when choosing a physician, may wish to consider the physician's gender.

Indeed, people are more likely to follow the advice of doctors they see as warm, caring, friendly, and interested in the welfare of patients (DiNicola & DiMatteo, 1984). Furthermore, there is emerging evidence that a provider who acts with warmth toward the patient can amplify patients' expectations about their treatment and increase their response to even placebo treatments (Howe et al., 2019). Alternatively, when patients believe that physicians look down on them or treat them with disrespect, patients are less likely to follow physicians' advice or keep medical appointments (Blanchard & Lurie, 2004). In fact, poor communication between the physician and patient may have a particularly detrimental effect on adherence when the physician and patient come from different ethnic backgrounds (Schoenthaler et al., 2012).

Being in the Hospital

In serious cases, seeking health care may result in hospitalization. Over the past 30 years, hospitals and the

experience of being in the hospital have both changed. First, many types of surgery and tests that were formerly handled through hospitalization are now performed on an outpatient basis. Second, hospital stays have become shorter. Third, an expanding array of technology is available for diagnosis and treatment. Fourth, patients feel increasingly free to voice their concerns to their physician (Bell et al., 2001). As a result of these changes, people who are not severely ill are not likely to be hospitalized, and people who are admitted to a hospital are more severely ill than those admitted 30 years ago.

Ironically, although managed care has helped control costs through shorter hospital stays, it has not always been in the interest of the patient. Technological medicine has become more prominent in patient care, and personal treatment by the hospital staff has become less so. These factors can combine to make hospitalization a stressful experience (Weitz, 2010). In addition, understaffing and the challenges of monitoring complex technology and medication regimens have created an alarming number of medical mistakes (see Would You Believe . . . ? box).

The Hospital Patient Role Part of the sick role is to be a patient, and being a patient means conforming to the rules of a hospital and complying with medical advice. When a person enters the hospital as a patient, that person becomes part of a complex institution and assumes a role within that institution. That role includes some difficult aspects: being treated as a “nonperson,” tolerating lack of information, and losing control of daily activities. Patients find incidents such as waits, delays, and communication problems with staff distressing, and such incidents decrease patients’ satisfaction (Weingart et al., 2006).

When people are hospitalized, all but their illness becomes invisible, and their status is reduced to that of a “nonperson.” Not only are patients’ identities ignored, but their comments and questions may also be overlooked. Hospital procedure focuses on the technical aspects of medical care; it usually ignores patients’ emotional needs and leaves them less satisfied with their treatment than patients who are treated as persons, listened to, and informed about their condition (Boudreaux & O’Hea, 2004; Clever et al., 2008).

Would You BELIEVE...?

Hospitals May Be a Leading Cause of Death

Would you believe that receiving medical care, especially in an American hospital, can be fatal? Newspaper headlines have painted an alarming picture of the dangers of receiving health care, based on a series of studies. In 1999, a study from the Institute of Medicine made headlines with its findings that at least 44,000—and perhaps as many as 98,000—people die in U.S. hospitals every year because of medical errors (Kohn, Corrigan, & Donaldson, 1999). Later reports found even higher numbers of medical mistakes (HealthGrades, 2011; Zhan & Miller, 2003). Although the United States does not recognize medical error as a cause of death, one recent estimate ranked medical error as the third leading cause of death in the United States (Makary & Daniel, 2016).

Unfortunately, medical errors aren’t the only cause of unnecessary deaths of patients in U.S. hospitals. Medication, too, can be fatal. An Institute of Medicine study (Aspden, Wolcott, Bootman, & Cronenwett, 2007) estimated that hospitalized patients experience an average of one medication error per patient per day of hospitalization, resulting in morbidity, mortality, and an increased cost of hospitalization. A meta-analysis of studies on adverse drug reactions (Lazarou, Pomeranz, & Corey, 1998) found that, even when prescribed and taken properly, prescription drugs account for between 76,000 and 137,000 deaths each year. This analysis included patients admitted to a hospital for an adverse drug reaction as well as those already in the hospital who suffered a fatal drug

reaction. This meta-analysis also estimated the total number of toxic drug reactions among hospitalized patients at more than two million. Despite widespread publicity and growing concern, little improvement seems to have occurred during the past 15 years. The medical profession has achieved only limited progress toward solving the problem of medical errors (Leape & Berwick, 2005), and a recent study (HealthGrades, 2011) indicated that medical errors in hospitals have not decreased.

One barrier to correcting the situation comes from the climate of silence and blame that surrounds errors—health care professionals do not want to admit to errors or report colleagues who have made errors because of the blame involved. Rather than silence and blame, Lucian Leape

(Leape & Berwick, 2005) suggested that hospitals should be eager to seek information about errors and that analysis should focus on the systems that allow errors rather than the people who make errors.

Interventions may be able to reduce the incidence of medical errors (Woodward et al., 2010). These

include patient-focused interventions, such as encouraging patients to state their name to physicians and asking physicians whether they washed their hands. In addition, institutional interventions may also reduce medical errors, such as reducing the number of hours in a typical physician's or nurse's

shift and implementing computer systems to better detect potential medication errors. The practice of medicine will never be free of errors but creating systems that make errors more difficult to commit will improve patient safety and cut hospitalization costs.

The lack of information that patients experience comes from hospital routine rather than from an attempt to keep information from patients. Most physicians believe that patients should receive full information about their conditions. However, openly exchanged information between patient and practitioner is difficult to achieve in the hospital, where physicians spend only a brief amount of time talking to patients. In addition, information may be unavailable because patients are undergoing diagnostic tests. The hospital staff may not explain the purpose or results of diagnostic testing, leaving the patient without information and filled with anxiety.

Hospitalized patients are expected to conform submissively to the rules of the hospital and the orders of their doctor, thus relinquishing much control over their lives. People tend to manifest heightened physiological responses and to react on a physical level to uncontrollable stimulation more strongly than they do when they can exert some control over their condition. Lack of control can decrease people's capacity to concentrate and can increase their tendency to report physical symptoms.

For the efficiency of the organization, uniform treatment and conformity to hospital routine are desirable, even though they deprive patients of information and control. Hospitals have no insidious plot to deprive patients of their freedom, but this occurs when hospitals impose their routine on patients. Restoring control to patients in any significant way would further complicate an already complex organization, but the restoration of small types of control may be effective. For example, most hospitals now allow patients some choice of foods and provide TV remote controls to give patients the power to select a program to watch (or not watch). These aspects of control are small but possibly important, as we discuss in Chapter 5 (Langer & Rodin, 1976; Rodin & Langer, 1977).

Children and Hospitalization Few children pass through childhood without some injury, disease, or condition that requires hospitalization. The hospitalization experience can be a source of stress and anxiety—separation from parents, an unfamiliar environment, diagnostic tests, administration of anesthesia, immunization “shots,” surgery, and postoperative pain. Pediatric hospitals often offer some type of preparation program for children. Training children to cope with their fear of treatment presents special problems to health psychologists. Providing children and parents with information about hospital procedures and equipment can be an effective way to decrease anxiety.

Contrary to what many parents may think, reassuring a child is not an effective way to reduce fear in either the child or the parent. In a study with four- to six-year-old children who were about to receive preschool immunization shots, researchers (Manimala, Blount, & Cohen, 2000) paired each child with their parent and then randomly assigned each dyad to either a distraction group or a reassurance group. Researchers asked the parents of children in the distraction group to distract their child's attention away from the immunization procedure but asked parents of children in the reassurance group to reduce their child's anxiety by reassuring them that they had nothing to fear. Results strongly favored the distraction group, with three times as many children in the reassurance group requiring physical restraint. Also, children in the reassurance group showed much more verbal fear than did the other children. An interesting adjunct to these findings involved the training received by parents prior to the immunization process. Those who received training on how to reassure their child expressed a high level of confidence that they could calm their child. Then, after immunization, the reassuring parents not only had problems helping their children, but they also rated themselves as being much more distressed than did the other parents. In turn, parents'



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Increased use of technology, lack of information, and lack of control contribute to the stress of hospitalization.

distress increases the child's anxiety (Wolff et al., 2009). Reassurance, it seems, does not reduce stress for either the parent or the child.

Another strategy for helping children is modeling—that is, seeing another child cope successfully with a similar stressful procedure. A combination of modeling with a cognitive behavioral intervention and self-talk reduced distress for children who were receiving painful treatments for leukemia (Jay et al., 1991). Indeed, this intervention was more successful than a drug treatment that included the tranquilizer Valium. A review of interventions for children (Mitchell, Johnston, & Keppel, 2004) indicated that multicomponent programs were generally more effective than single-component programs; providing information and teaching coping skills are both important for children and their parents when faced with hospitalization.

Cost, not effectiveness, is the main problem with intervention strategies to reduce children's distress resulting from hospitalization for specific medical procedures. The trend is toward cost cutting, and all interventions add to medical care costs. Some of these interventions may be cost effective if they reduce the need for additional care or decrease other expenses.

IN SUMMARY

The expense of medical care has led to restricted access for most U.S. residents. People who have medical insurance receive better care and have more choices about their care than people without insurance. Concerns about medical costs led to the creation of two U.S. government programs: Medicare, which pays for hospitalization for those over age 65; and Medicaid, which pays for care for poor people who are aged, blind, disabled, pregnant, or the parents of a dependent child.

Physicians are primary sources of medical care, but alternative sources have become more popular over the past two decades. People without medical insurance often have limitations in securing a regular medical care practitioner. Patients' satisfaction with their providers is an important factor in seeking medical care, as well as adherence to medical advice. Physicians who listen to their patients and are perceived as personable, confident, and empathetic are those who are most likely to be rated as excellent physicians. Female physicians tend to exhibit these characteristics more than male physicians.

Hospitalized patients often experience added stress of being in the hospital. They are typically regarded as “nonpersons,” receive inadequate information concerning their illness, and experience some loss of control over their lives. They are expected to conform to hospital routine and to comply with frequent requests of the hospital staff.

Hospitalized children and their parents experience special problems and may receive special training to help them deal with hospitalization. Several types of interventions, including modeling and cognitive behavioral programs, are effective in helping children and their parents cope with this difficult situation.

APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

1. Imagine that a family member will be seeing a practitioner for a potentially serious health condition. What would you suggest the family member do to prepare for the visit so the interaction will be satisfying? What would you suggest if it were a child preparing to receive a potentially painful or stressful medical treatment?

Questions

This chapter has addressed three basic questions:

1. What factors are related to seeking medical attention?

How people determine their health status when they don’t feel well depends not only on social, ethnic, and demographic factors but also on the characteristics of their symptoms and their concept of illness. In deciding whether they are ill, people consider at least four characteristics of their symptoms: (1) the obvious visibility of the symptoms; (2) the perceived severity of the illness; (3) the degree to which the symptoms interfere with their lives; and (4) the frequency and persistence of the symptoms. Once people are diagnosed as sick, they adopt the sick role that involves relief from normal social and occupational responsibilities and the duty to try to get better.

2. Where do people seek medical information?

Prior to seeking medical care and information from the health care system, people often turn to other people and the Internet. The lay referral network is people’s family and friends, who often help interpret the meaning of symptoms as well as suggest possible causes and cures. In recent years, the Internet is a common source of health information, although the quality of health information on the Internet varies widely. When patients find accurate and relevant health information, it can benefit the patient–practitioner relationship. However, not all

patients have access to health information through the Internet or are wary of bringing up such information with their providers.

3. What problems do people encounter in receiving medical care?

People encounter problems in paying for medical care, and those without insurance often have limited access to health care. The U.S. government’s creation of Medicare and Medicaid has helped people over 65 and some poor people with access to health care, but many people have problems finding a regular practitioner and receiving optimal health care.

Physicians may not have a lot of time to devote to a patient, which may create communication problems that reduce patients’ satisfaction.

Communication problems include using medical language unfamiliar to the patient, as well as focusing on determining and describing a diagnosis rather than allowing the patients to fully describe their concerns.

Although hospital stays are shorter than they were 30 years ago, being in the hospital is a difficult experience for both adults and children. As a hospital patient, a person must conform to hospital procedures and policies, which include being treated as a “nonperson,” tolerating lack of information, and losing control of daily activities. Children who are hospitalized are placed in an unfamiliar environment, may be separated from parents, and may undergo surgery or other painful medical

procedures. Interventions that help children and parents manage this stressful experience may ease the distress, but the cost for such services is a factor that limits their availability.

Suggested Readings

Leventhal, H., Breland, J. Y., Mora, P. A., & Leventhal, E. A. (2010). Lay representations of illness and treatment: A framework for action. In A. Steptoe (Ed.), *Handbook of behavioral medicine: Methods and applications* (pp. 137–154). New York: Springer. This chapter not only discusses the importance of people's conceptualizations of illness in terms of both health seeking and disease management but also outlines ways in which illness conceptualizations may be used as targets for intervention.

Martin, R., & Leventhal, H. (2004). Symptom perception and health care-seeking behavior. In J. M. Raczynski & L. C. Leviton (Eds.), *Handbook of clinical health psychology* (vol. 2, pp. 299–328). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. This chapter explores the situations and perceptions that underlie seeking health care, including the difficulty of interpreting symptoms and the theories that attempt to explain this behavior.

Weitz, R. (2010). *The sociology of health, illness, and health care: A critical approach* (5th ed.). Belmont, CA: Cengage. Weitz critically reviews the health care situation in the United States in this medical sociology book. Chapters 10, 11, and 12 provide a description of health care settings and professions, including many alternatives to traditional health care.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 4-1** Define adherence; understand the strengths and limitations of different ways of measuring adherence
- 4-2** Understand how the frequency of nonadherence relates to the type of health condition, as well as common barriers to adherence
- 4-3** Understand how medical factors, such as a disease's severity and a medical treatment's characteristics, affect adherence
- 4-4** Understand how personal factors, such as age, gender, and personality, relate to adherence
- 4-5** Understand how environmental factors, such as socioeconomic status, social support, and cultural context, relate to adherence
- 4-6** Understand the difference between continuum theories and stage theories of health behavior and what they assume about how people change in adherence to health behaviors
- 4-7** Identify the key factors in continuum theories, such as the health belief model, self-efficacy theory, the theory of planned behavior, and behavioral theory
- 4-8** Identify the key factors and stages of stage theories, such as the transtheoretical model and the health action process approach
- 4-9** Recognize how two factors—behavioral willingness and implementational intentions—can help explain why some intentions translate into action, whereas other intentions do not
- 4-10** Understand the difference between educational and behavioral strategies in improving adherence
- 4-11** Identify several behavioral strategies that have been used to improve adherence

CHAPTER 4

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Rajiv Kumar

- Issues in Adherence
- What Factors Predict Adherence?
- Why and How Do People Adhere to Healthy Behaviors?
- The Intention–Behavior Gap
- Improving Adherence

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on six basic questions:

1. What is adherence, how is it measured, and how frequently does it occur?
2. What factors predict adherence?
3. What are continuum theories of health behavior, and how do they explain adherence?
4. What are stage theories of health behavior, and how do they explain adherence?
5. What is the intention–behavior gap, and what factors predict whether intentions are translated into behavior?
6. How can adherence be improved?

Adhering to Healthy Behavior

4-1 Issues in Adherence

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 4-1 Define adherence; understand the strengths and limitations of different ways of measuring adherence
- 4-2 Understand how the frequency of nonadherence relates to the type of health condition, as well as common barriers to adherence

Why was Rajiv Kumar's ShapeUp program effective in encouraging people to improve their diet and physical activity? What did the ShapeUp program provide to participants that brief advice from a physician typically does not?

For medical advice to benefit a patient's health, two requirements must be met. First, the advice must be valid. Second, the patient must follow this advice. Both conditions are essential. Ill-founded advice that patients strictly follow may produce new health problems, such as when parents follow inaccurate advice to not have children vaccinated for common health problems (see Chapter 3 box on "There Is Controversy about Childhood Vaccinations"). On the other hand, excellent advice is worthless if patients have difficulty following it. As many as 125,000 people in the United States may die each year because they fail to adhere to medical advice, especially by failing to take prescribed medications (Cutting Edge Information, 2004). As two meta-analyses show, adhering to a medical regimen makes a large difference in improvement (DiMatteo et al., 2002; Simpson et al., 2006).

Kumar developed his program to increase people's social support, and, as you will learn in this chapter, social support is one factor that helps people adhere to medical advice. There are other elements of the ShapeUp program that also contributed to its success; we will also describe these factors in this chapter. In addition, we will present some of the major theories that attempt to explain why some people adhere to recommendations for healthy behavior, but others often have difficulty.



Check **YOUR BELIEFS**

Regarding Adhering to Healthy Behavior

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. I believe physical activity is important, but every time I try to exercise, I can never keep it up for very long.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. If my prescription medicine doesn't seem to be working, I will continue taking it.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. I do not need to engage in any planning to change my health habits, as my good intentions always carry me through.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. I won't have a prescription filled if it costs too much.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. I see my dentist twice a year even if I don't have a problem.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. I'm a smoker who knows that smoking can cause heart disease and lung cancer, but I believe</p> | <p>that other smokers are much more likely to get these diseases than I am.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. I am a woman who doesn't worry about breast cancer because I don't have any symptoms.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 8. I am a man who doesn't worry about testicular cancer because I don't have any symptoms.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 9. People have advised me to stop smoking, but I have never been able to quit.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 10. I frequently forget to take my medication.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 11. When I set a goal to improve my health, I plan out the specific ways and specific</p> | <p>situations in which I can act to achieve the goal.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 12. The last time I was sick, the doctor gave me advice that I didn't completely understand, but I was too embarrassed to say so.</p> |
|---|---|---|

Items 2, 5, and 11 represent good adherence beliefs and habits. Each of the other items, however, represents a risk factor for adhering to medical advice. Although it may be nearly impossible to adhere to all good health recommendations (such as not smoking, eating a healthy diet, exercising, and having regular dental and medical checkups), you can improve your health by adhering to sound medical advice. As you read this chapter, you will learn more about the health benefits of adherence, as well as the beliefs and techniques that can improve adherence.

What is Adherence?

What does it mean to be adherent? We define **adherence** as a person's ability and willingness to follow recommended health practices. R. Brian Haynes (1979) suggested a broader definition of the term, defining adherence as "the extent to which a person's behavior (in terms of taking medications, following diets, or executing lifestyle changes) coincides with medical or health advice" (pp. 1–2). This definition expands the concept of adherence beyond merely taking medications to include maintaining healthy lifestyle practices, such as eating properly, getting sufficient exercise, avoiding undue stress, abstaining from smoking, and not abusing alcohol. In addition, adherence includes making and keeping periodic medical and dental appointments, using seat belts, and engaging in other behaviors that are consistent with the best health advice available. Adherence is a complex concept, with people being adherent in one situation and nonadherent in another (Ogedegbe, Schoenthaler, & Fernandez, 2007).

How is Adherence Measured?

How do researchers know the percentage of patients who fail to adhere to practitioners' recommendations? What methods do they use to identify those who do not

adhere? The answer to the first question is that adherence rates are not known with certainty, but researchers use techniques that yield a great deal of information about nonadherence. At least six basic methods of measuring patient adherence are available: (1) asking the practitioner, (2) asking the patient, (3) asking other people, (4) monitoring medication usage, (5) examining biochemical evidence, and (6) using a combination of these procedures.

The first of these methods, asking the practitioner, is usually the poorest choice. Physicians generally overestimate their patients' adherence rates, and even when their guesses are not overly optimistic, they are usually wrong (Miller et al., 2002). In general, practitioners' accuracy is only slightly better than chance, as practitioners may rely on cues such as age, race, and weight to make inferences about adherence (Huizinga et al., 2010; Lutfey & Ketcham, 2005; Parker et al., 2007).

Asking patients themselves is a slightly more valid procedure, but it is fraught with many problems. Self-reports are inaccurate for at least two reasons. First, patients tend to report behaviors that make them appear more adherent than they are. Second, they may simply not know their own rate of adherence, as people do not typically pay close attention to their health-related behaviors. Interviews are more prone to these



Real-World Profile of **RAJIV KUMAR**



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In 2005, Rajiv Kumar was a medical student at Brown University in Rhode Island. Soon into his medical training, he noticed that every patient he worked with seemed to struggle with making healthy changes to their behavior, such as eating healthier or increasing physical activity. The only help that physicians seemed to provide was to simply tell patients to join a gym or go on a diet. This well-intentioned advice rarely seemed enough to get patients to make lasting changes to their behavior.

Based on these experiences, Kumar decided to drop out of medical school. But rather than giving up on his goal of making people healthier, he used one of his observations as a source of inspiration: “I noticed that all of the patients who succeeded told us that they had social support from family and friends.”

Kumar teamed up with one of his fellow medical students to develop a comprehensive program that harnessed the power of social support to get people to succeed at their diet and physical activity goals. Kumar secured a small amount of money to start his endeavor and emailed every person he knew in Rhode Island to sign up for his program, which became known as ShapeUp Rhode Island.

The initial ShapeUp program was a 16-week program that helped people form “teams” of friends and work colleagues who all shared the same goal of improving their lifestyle. An online platform allowed people to set goals, track their progress, receive reminders, and, most importantly, share and compare results with other team members. In addition, teams could compete against each other. Kumar called it “a Facebook for health.”

The program seemed to work remarkably. Over 2,000 people signed up for the program; 80% completed the program and lost about 8 pounds on average. These results generated the interest of many local businesses that were interested in including the program as part of their workplace wellness initiatives. This allowed the program to expand.

A study demonstrated what Kumar suspected all along; the social aspect of the ShapeUp program was a major component of its success. The more the ShapeUp participants felt there was social support—and social pressure—to succeed at their plans, the better they did (Leahey et al., 2012).

Soon after, over 800 companies provided the ShapeUp program to their employees, with over 2 million participants. Now, ShapeUp joins the ranks of many other fitness programs that harness the power of social support and social influence to help people achieve their health goals.

types of errors than asking patients to keep records or diaries of their behavior (Garber, 2004). Because self-report measures have questionable validity, researchers often supplement them with other methods (Parker et al., 2007).

Another method is to ask hospital personnel and family members to monitor the patient, but this procedure has at least two problems. First, constant observation may be physically impossible, especially regarding behaviors such as diet, smoking, and alcohol consumption (observing risky sexual behavior raises clear ethical issues as well!). Second, persistent monitoring creates an artificial situation and frequently results in higher

rates of adherence than would otherwise occur. This outcome is desirable, of course, but as a means of assessing adherence, it contains a built-in error that makes observation by others inaccurate.

A fourth method of assessing adherence is objectively monitoring a person’s behavior. This may occur by monitoring a patient’s medicine usage, such as counting pills or assessing whether patients obtain prescriptions or refills (Balkrishnan & Jayawant, 2007). These procedures seem to be more objective, since very few errors are likely to be made in counting the number of pills absent from a bottle or the number of patients who have their prescriptions filled. Even if the required number

of pills are gone or the prescriptions filled, however, the patient may not have taken the medication or may have taken it in a manner other than the one prescribed.

The development of electronic technology makes possible more sophisticated methods to monitor adherence. Researchers can assess physical activity by using devices that record physical movement or by sending surveys to people's mobile phones that ask about physical activity in the past 30 minutes (Dunton et al., 2011). Researchers can ask patients to send photographs of pill capsules from mobile phones to verify the time when they take their medications (Galloway et al., 2011). Other methods such as the Medication Event Monitoring System (MEMS) include a microprocessor in a pill cap that records the date and time of every bottle opening and closing, thus yielding a record of usage (if opening the bottle equates to using the medication). In addition, this system includes an Internet link that uploads the data stored in the device so that researchers can monitor adherence on a daily or weekly basis. Not surprisingly, assessment by MEMS does not show high consistency with self-reports of medication usage (Balkrishnan & Jayawant, 2007; Shi et al., 2010), but assessment by MEMS is likely to be more valid. In a study of HIV-positive children in Uganda who were prescribed antiretroviral medications to control their condition, adherence measured by MEMS predicted biochemical measures of viral load over a one-year period, but adherence measured by self-report did not (Haberer et al., 2012).

Examining biochemical evidence is a fifth method of measuring adherence. This procedure looks at biochemical evidence, such as blood or urine samples that reflect adherence, to determine whether a patient behaved in an adherent fashion. For example, researchers can measure the progression of HIV infection with assessments of viral load, a biochemical measure of the amount of HIV in the blood; adherence to HIV medication relates to changes in HIV viral load. Researchers can assess proper management of diabetes by a blood test that gauges the amount of glucose in the blood over a period of months. However, problems can arise with the use of biochemical evidence to assess adherence because individuals vary in their biochemical response to drugs. In addition, this approach requires frequent medical monitoring that may be intrusive and expensive.

Finally, clinicians can use a combination of these methods to assess adherence. Several studies (Haberer et al., 2012; Velligan et al., 2007) used a variety of

methods to assess adherence, including interviewing patients, counting pills, electronic monitoring, and measuring biochemical evidence, as well as a combination of all these methods. The results indicate good agreement among pill counts, electronic monitoring, and measuring biochemical evidence, but poor agreement between these objective measures and patients' or clinicians' reports. A weakness of using multiple methods of measuring adherence is the cost, but it is an important strategy when researchers need the most accurate evidence to measure adherence.

How Frequent is Nonadherence?

How common is nonadherence? Kumar's experience as a medical student suggested that nonadherence among his patients was common. However, the answer to this question depends in part on how adherence is defined, the nature of the illness under consideration, the demographic features of the population, and the methods used to assess adherence. When interest in these questions developed in the late 1970s, David Sackett and John C. Snow (1979) reviewed more than 500 studies that dealt with the frequency of adherence. Sackett and Snow found higher rates for patients' keeping appointments when patients initiated the appointments (75%) than when appointments were scheduled for them (50%). As expected, adherence rates were higher when treatment was meant to cure rather than to prevent a disease. However, adherence was lower for medication taken for a chronic condition over a long period; adherence was around 50% for either prevention or cure.

More recent reviews confirm the problem of nonadherence, estimating nonadherence to medication regimens at nearly 25% (DiMatteo, 2004b). Adherence rates tend to be higher in more recent studies than in older ones, but many of the factors identified in Sackett and Snow's (1979) review continued to be significant predictors of adherence. Medication treatments yielded higher adherence rates than recommendations for exercise, diet, or other types of health-related behavior change. However, DiMatteo's analysis revealed that not all chronic conditions yielded equally low adherence rates. Some chronic conditions, such as HIV, arthritis, gastrointestinal disorders, and cancer, showed high adherence rates, whereas diabetes and pulmonary disease showed lower adherence. Nevertheless, failure to adhere to medical advice is a widespread problem, with one prominent review stating that finding "effective ways

to help people *follow* medical treatments could have far larger effects on health than any treatment itself” (Haynes et al., 2008, p. 20).

What are the Barriers to Adherence?

One category of reasons for nonadherence includes all those problems inherent in hearing and heeding physicians’ advice. Patients may have financial or practical problems in making and keeping appointments and in filling, taking, and refilling prescriptions. Patients may reject the prescribed regimen as being too difficult, time consuming, expensive, or not adequately effective. Or they may just forget. Patients tend to pick and choose among the elements of the regimen their practitioners offer, treating this information as advice rather than orders (Vermeire et al., 2001). These patients may stop taking their medication because adherence is too much trouble or does not fit into the routine of their daily lives.

Patients may stop taking medication or changing other behaviors when their symptoms disappear. Paradoxically, others stop because they fail to feel better or begin to feel worse, leading them to believe that the medication is useless. Still others, in squirrel-like fashion, save a few pills for the next time they get sick.

Some people may not adhere due to an **optimistic bias**—a belief that they will be spared the negative consequences of nonadherence that afflict other people (Weinstein, 1980, 2001). Optimistic biases are pervasive. Young and healthy people, in particular, often believe that their personal risks for health conditions are lower than that of the average person of their age (Masiero et al., 2018; Rothman, Klein, & Weinstein, 1996). Both adolescent and adult smokers often believe that their risk of disease is lower than that of other smokers (Arnett, 2000). In the early weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic, most Americans viewed their personal risk of infection as lower than that of the average American, and this optimistic bias was associated with taking fewer precautionary measures against COVID infection (Wise et al., 2020). Thus, overcoming optimistic biases is one challenge in improving adherence across a wide variety of health behaviors.

Another set of reasons for high rates of nonadherence is that the current definition of adherence demands lifestyle choices that are difficult to attain. At the beginning of the 20th century, when the leading causes of death and disease were infectious diseases,

adherence was simpler. Patients were adherent when they followed the doctor’s advice regarding medication, rest, and so on. Adherence is no longer a matter of taking the proper pills and following short-term advice. The three leading causes of death in the United States—cardiovascular disease, cancer, and chronic obstructive lung disease—are all affected by unhealthy lifestyle choices such as smoking cigarettes, abusing alcohol, not eating properly, and not exercising regularly. In addition, of course, people now must also make and keep medical and dental appointments, listen with understanding to the advice of health care providers, and, finally, follow that advice. These conditions present a complex array of requirements that are difficult for anyone to fulfill completely. **Table 4.1** summarizes some of the reasons that patients give for not adhering to medical advice.

TABLE 4.1 Reasons Why Patients May Not Adhere to Medical Advice

“It’s too much trouble.”
“The medication was too expensive, so I took fewer pills to make them last.”
“The medication didn’t work very well. I was still sick, so I stopped taking it.”
“The medication worked after only one week, so I stopped taking it.”
“I won’t get sick. God will save me.”
“I’ll start the diet tomorrow.”
“I’ll never be able to stick to that diet plan.”
“I’m too embarrassed to go to the gym.”
“I don’t have the time in my schedule to exercise.”
“A cancer screening test will be too painful and uncomfortable.”
“The medication makes me sick.”
“I feel fine. I don’t see any reason to take something to prevent illness.”
“Healthy foods take too long to prepare.”
“I don’t like my doctor. He looks down on people without insurance.”
“I didn’t understand my doctor’s instructions and was too embarrassed to ask her to repeat them.”
“I don’t like the taste of nicotine chewing gum.”
“I didn’t understand the directions on the label.”

IN SUMMARY

Adherence is the extent to which a person is able and willing to follow medical and health advice. In order for people to profit from adherence, first, the advice must be valid; and second, patients must follow that advice. Inability or unwillingness to adhere to health-related behaviors increases people's chances of serious health problems or even death.

Researchers can assess adherence in at least six ways: (1) asking the physician, (2) asking the patient, (3) asking other people, (4) monitoring medical usage, (5) examining biochemical evidence, and (6) using a combination of these procedures. No one of these procedures is both reliable and valid. However, apart from clinician judgment, most have some validity and usefulness. When accuracy is crucial, using two or more of these methods yields greater accuracy than reliance on a single technique.

The frequency of nonadherence depends on the nature of the illness. People are more likely to adhere to a medication regimen than to a diet plan or exercise program. The average rate of nonadherence is slightly less than 25%. To understand and improve adherence, health psychologists seek to understand the barriers that keep people from adhering, including the difficulty of altering lifestyles of long duration, inadequate practitioner–patient communications, and erroneous beliefs as to what advice patients should follow.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Identify a health condition for which adherence can help with both prevention *and* treatment. What do you see as the major barriers to adhering to the behaviors preventing the condition? What are the barriers to adhering to the behaviors that may help treat the condition?

4-2 What Factors Predict Adherence?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 4-3** Understand how medical factors, such as a disease's severity and a medical treatment's characteristics, affect adherence

- 4-4** Understand how personal factors, such as age, gender, and personality, relate to adherence

- 4-5** Understand how environmental factors, such as socioeconomic status, social support, and cultural context, relate to adherence

Who adheres and who does not? The factors that predict adherence include personal characteristics and environmental factors that are difficult or impossible to change, such as age or socioeconomic factors. The factors also include specific health beliefs that are more easily modifiable. In this section, we consider the first set of factors, which include disease severity; treatment characteristics, including side effects and complexity of the treatment; personal characteristics, such as age, gender, and personality; and environmental factors such as social support, income, and cultural norms (see [Table 4.2](#)). Later in this chapter, we will present major theories of adherence that identify specific beliefs and behavioral strategies that are more easily modifiable through intervention.

Disease Severity

At the start of this chapter, Kumar was disheartened by his observations that many patients had difficulties following doctor's recommendations. Even when people should be highly motivated to adhere—such as when they have a severe, potentially crippling, or life-threatening illness—they often do not adhere. In general, people with a serious disease are no more likely than people with a less serious problem to adhere to medical advice (DiMatteo, 2004b). What matters in predicting adherence is not the objective severity of a patient's disease but, rather, the patient's *perception* of the disease's severity (DiMatteo, Haskard, & Williams, 2007). That is, people adhere most when they believe a threat exists, even if their belief does not match the medical facts.

Treatment Characteristics

Characteristics of the treatment, such as side effects of a prescribed medication and the complexity of the treatment, also present potential problems for adherence.

Side Effects of the Medication Research with diabetes medications (Mann et al., 2009) and the complex regimen of HIV medication (Applebaum et al., 2009;



More complex treatments tend to lower compliance rates.

Herrmann et al., 2008) shows that those who experience or have concerns about severe side effects are less likely to take their medications than those who do not have such concerns.

Complexity of the Treatment Are people less likely to adhere as treatment procedures become increasingly complex? In general, the greater the number of doses or variety of medications people must take, the greater the likelihood that they will not take pills as prescribed (Piette et al., 2006). Researchers observe this relationship between number of doses and adherence across a variety of chronic medical conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, and HIV (Ingersoll & Cohen, 2008; Pollack et al. 2010). For example, people who need to take one pill a day adhere fairly well (as high as 90%); increasing the dosage to two a day produces little decrease (Claxton, Cramer, & Pierce, 2001). When people must take four doses a day, however, adherence plummets to below 40%; this may be due to people having difficulty fitting medications into daily routines. For example, pills prescribed once a day can be cued to routine activities, such as waking up; those prescribed twice a day can be cued to early morning and late night; and those prescribed three times a day can be cued to meals. Schedules recommending patients to take medication four or more times a day, or to take two or more medications a day, create difficulties and lower adherence rates. Other aspects of a medical regimen can contribute to complexity, such as the need to cut pills in half prior to taking them. In a study of nearly 100,000 patients of type 2

diabetes, patients who were prescribed the most complex regimen—in terms of both the need to split pills as well as the number of doses per day—showed the lowest rates of adherence (Pollack et al., 2010).

Personal Factors

Who is most adherent, women or men? The young or the old? Are there certain personality patterns that predict adherence? In general, demographic factors such as age and gender show some relationship to adherence, but each of these factors alone is too small to be a good predictor of who will adhere and who will not (DiMatteo, 2004b). Personality was one of the

first factors considered in relation to adherence, but other personal factors, such as emotional factors and personal beliefs, appear more important in understanding adherence.

Age The relationship between age and adherence is not simple. Assessing adherence among children is difficult, because the person whose adherence is important is actually the parent and not the child (De Civita & Dobkin, 2005). As children grow into adolescents, they become more responsible for adhering to medical regimens, and this situation continues throughout adulthood. However, older people may face situations that make adherence difficult, such as memory problems, poor health, and regimens that include many medications (Gans & McPhillips, 2003). These developmental issues contribute to a complex relationship between age and adherence. One study (Thomas et al., 1995) found a curvilinear relationship between age and adherence to colorectal cancer screening. That is, those who adhered best were around 70 years old, with older and younger participants adhering least. Those who are 70 years old may not be the best at adhering to all medical advice, but this result suggests that both older and younger adults, plus children and adolescents, experience more problems with adherence. Other research confirms the problems with these age groups.

Even with caregivers to assist them, children with asthma (Penza-Clyve, Mansell, & McQuaid, 2004), diabetes (Cramer, 2004), and HIV (Farley et al., 2004) often fail to adhere to their medical regimens. As they grow into adolescence and exert more control over their own

health care, adherence problems become even more prominent (DiMatteo, 2004b). Several studies (Miller & Drotar, 2003; Olsen & Sutton, 1998) show that as diabetic children become adolescents, their adherence to recommended exercise and insulin regimens decreases, and conflicts with parents over diabetes management increase. Young adults with these diseases also experience adherence problems (Ellis et al., 2007; Herrmann et al., 2008). Thus, age shows a small but complex relationship with adherence.

Gender Overall, researchers find few differences in the adherence rates of women and men, but some differences exist in following specific recommendations. In general, men and women are about equal in adhering to taking medication (Andersson et al., 2005; Chapman et al., 2008), controlling diabetes (Hartz et al., 2006), or keeping an appointment for a medical test (Sola-Vera et al., 2008). However, women are less adherent than men in taking medications to lower cholesterol, but this may be due to the higher prevalence of heart disease among men (Mann et al., 2010). Women may be better at adhering to healthy diets, such as sodium-restricted diets (Chung et al., 2006) and diets with lots of fruits and vegetables (Emanuel et al., 2012; Thompson et al., 2011). Aside from these differences, men and women have similar levels of adherence (DiMatteo, 2004b).

Personality Patterns When the problem of non-adherence became obvious, researchers initially considered the concept of a nonadherent personality. According to this concept, people with certain personality patterns would have low adherence rates. If this concept is accurate, then the same people should be nonadherent across various situations. However, most evidence does not support this notion. Nonadherence is often specific to the situation (Lutz, Silbret, & Olshan, 1983), and adherence to one treatment program is typically unrelated to adherence to others (Ogedegbe, Schoenthaler, & Fernandez, 2007). However, there may be a few “clusters” of nonadherent behaviors that occur together. For example, people who smoke tobacco often tend to overuse alcohol and be physically inactive (deRuiter et al., 2014; Morris et al., 2016). Thus, the evidence suggests that nonadherence is not a global personality trait but is specific to a given situation (Haynes, 2001).

Emotional Factors People who experience stress and emotional problems also have difficulties with adherence. Stressful life events often interfere with efforts

to be physically active (Stults-Kolehmainen & Sinha, 2014). Similarly, HIV-positive individuals who report high stress levels are often less adherent to taking antiretroviral medication (Bottonari et al., 2005; Leserman et al., 2008).

Do anxiety and depression reduce adherence rates? Whereas anxiety has only a small relationship with adherence, depression has a major influence on adherence (DiMatteo, Lepper, & Croghan, 2000). The risk of non-adherence is three times greater in depressed patients than in those who are not depressed. More recent studies show that depression relates to lower adherence among people managing chronic illnesses, such as diabetes and HIV (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Katon et al., 2010; Sin & DiMatteo, 2014). Given that coping with a chronic illness can increase risk for depression (Nouwen et al., 2010), the link between depression, chronic illness, and adherence is an important public health concern (Moussavi et al., 2007).

Emotional factors clearly present risks, but do some personality characteristics relate to better adherence and improved health? Patients who express optimism and positive states of mind have better physical health (Chida & Steptoe, 2008; Pressman & Cohen, 2005; Rasmussen, Scheier, & Greenhouse, 2009) and are more likely to adhere to their medical regimens (Gonzalez et al., 2004). Furthermore, the trait of **conscientiousness**, one of the factors in the five-factor model of personality (McCrae & Costa, 2003), shows a reliable relationship to adherence and improved health (Bogg & Roberts, 2013). People high in conscientiousness tend to be responsible, organized, and self-disciplined. Not surprisingly, conscientiousness predicts adherence to an overall healthy lifestyle (Takahashi et al., 2013). Conscientiousness also relates to slower progression of HIV infection (O’Cleirigh et al., 2007) and greater medication adherence (Hill & Roberts, 2011; Molloy, O’Carroll, & Ferguson, 2014). Thus, emotional factors and personality traits may present either a risk or an advantage for adherence.

Environmental Factors

Although some personal factors are important for adherence, environmental factors exert an even larger influence. Included in this group of environmental factors are economic factors, social support, and cultural norms.

Economic Factors Of all the demographic factors examined by Robin DiMatteo (2004b), socioeconomic

factors such as education and income were the most strongly related to adherence. People with greater income and education tend to be more adherent. Two meta-analyses show that it is income, rather than education, that relates more strongly to adherence (DiMatteo, 2004b; Falagas, Zarkadoulia, Pliatsika, & Panos, 2008). Difference in income may also explain some ethnic differences in adherence. For example, Hispanic American children and adolescents have a lower rate of adherence to a diabetes regimen, but this difference disappears after controlling for income differences (Gallegos-Macias et al., 2003). Thus, economic factors show a relationship to health; one avenue is through access to health care, and another is through the ability to pay for treatments.

In the United States, people without insurance experience difficulties in obtaining access to health care and in follow-up care such as filling prescriptions (Gans & McPhillips, 2003). Many of the people who experience cost concerns have chronic diseases, which often require daily medications over long periods of time (Piette et al., 2006). In a study of Medicare beneficiaries over age 65 (Gellad, Haas, & Safran, 2007), cost concerns predicted nonadherence, and such concerns were more common for African Americans and Hispanic Americans than for European Americans. In another study, people who had been admitted to the hospital for heart disease were more likely to adhere to their medications to reduce cholesterol level during the next year if their insurance plan paid more of the cost of the prescription (Ye et al., 2007). Therefore, how much people must pay for their treatment affects not only access to medical care but also the likelihood of adhering to the treatment regimen. Unfortunately, these limitations and concerns about costs affect older people and ethnic minorities more often than others.

Social Support **Social support** is a broad concept referring to both tangible help and intangible help that a person receives from family members and from friends. A social support network is important for dealing with a chronic disease and for adhering to the required medical regimen (Kynge, 2004). Social support networks for adolescents include parents, peers (both those with and without similar conditions), people at school or work, health care providers, and even pets. In addition, adolescents use technology such as cell phones and computers to contact others and obtain support.

The level of social support one receives from friends and family is a strong predictor of adherence. In general, people who are isolated from others are likely to be

nonadherent; those who enjoy many close interpersonal relationships are more likely to follow medical advice. A review of 50 years' research (DiMatteo, 2004a) confirmed the importance of social support for adherence.

Researchers can analyze social support in terms of the variety and function of relationships that people have, as well as the types of support that people receive from these relationships (DiMatteo, 2004a). For example, living with someone is a significant contributor to adherence; people who are married and those who live with families are more adherent than those who live alone. However, simply living with someone is not sufficient—family conflict and partner stress may lead to reductions in adherence (Molloy et al., 2008). Thus, the living situation itself is not the important factor; rather, the support a person receives is the critical issue (DiMatteo, 2004a).

In the ShapeUp program described at the start of this chapter, a participant's teammates could provide social support in several ways, by either offering useful tips or by providing encouragement for success. Social support may consist of either practical or emotional support. Practical support includes reminders, helpful advice, and physical assistance in adhering. Emotional support includes nurturance, empathy, and encouragement. In studies of both patients recovering from heart problems (Molloy et al., 2008) and adolescents with diabetes (Ellis et al., 2007), practical support was a more important determinant of adherence than emotional support. Thus, social support is an important factor in adherence, and those who lack a support network have more trouble adhering to medical advice.

Cultural Norms Cultural beliefs and norms have a powerful effect not only on rates of adherence but also on what constitutes adherence. For example, if one's family or tribal traditions include strong beliefs in the efficacy of tribal healers, then the individual's adherence to modern medical recommendations might be low. A study of diabetic and hypertensive patients in Zimbabwe (Zyazema, 1984) found many people who were not adhering to their recommended therapies. As might be expected, many of these patients believed in traditional healers and had little faith in Western medical procedures. Thus, the extent to which people accept a medical practice has a large impact on adherence to that practice, resulting in poorer adherence for individuals who are less acculturated to Western medicine, such as immigrants or people who retain strong ties to another culture (Barron et al., 2004).

Failures to adhere to Western, technological medicine do not necessarily indicate a failure to adhere to some other medical tradition. People who maintain a cultural tradition may also retain its healers. For example, a study of Native Americans (Novins et al., 2004) revealed that many sick people sought the services of traditional healers, sometimes in combination with biomedical services. This strategy of combining treatments might be considered nonadherent by both types of healers.

People who accept different healing traditions should not necessarily be considered nonadherent when their illness calls for a complex biomedical regimen. Native Hawaiians, for example, show lower rates of adherence to medical regimens (Ka'opua & Mueller, 2004), partly because their cultural beliefs are more holistic and spiritual, and their traditions emphasize family support and cohesion. These cultural values are not compatible with those that form the basis of Western medicine. Thus, Native Hawaiians have more trouble than other ethnic groups in Hawaii in adhering to medical regimens to control diabetes and risks for heart disease. The health-related beliefs of Native Hawaiians with heart failure lead them to prefer native healers over physicians (Kaholokula et al., 2008). However, no differences appear in their rates of adherence to the complex regimen of antiretroviral therapy that helps to control HIV infection, and their cultural value of family support may be a positive factor (Ka'opua & Mueller, 2004).

Cultural beliefs can also increase adherence. For example, older Japanese patients are typically more adherent than similar patients from the United States or Europe (Chia, Schlenk, & Dunbar-Jacob, 2006). The Japanese health care system provides care for all citizens through a variety of services, which creates trust in the health care system. This trust extends to physicians; Japanese patients accept their physicians' authority, preferring to allow physicians to make health care decisions rather than make those decisions themselves. Consistent with this attitude, patients tend to respect the advice they receive from physicians and follow their orders carefully.

Culture and ethnicity also influence adherence through the treatment that people from different cultures and ethnic groups receive when seeking medical care. Physicians and other health care providers may be influenced by their patients' ethnic background and socioeconomic status, and this influence can affect patient

adherence. Physicians can have stereotypical and negative attitudes toward African American and low- and middle-income patients (Dovidio et al., 2008; van Ryn & Burke, 2000), including pessimistic beliefs regarding rates of adherence. Perceived discrimination and disrespect may contribute to ethnic differences in following physicians' recommendations and keeping appointments (Blanchard & Lurie, 2004). African Americans (14.1%), Asian Americans (20.2%), and Hispanic Americans (19.4%) reported that they felt discriminated against or treated with a lack of respect by a physician from whom they had received care within the past two years. In contrast, only about 9% of European American patients felt that they had been treated with disrespect by their physician. In this study, patients' perception of disrespect predicted lower adherence and more missed medical appointments.

These findings have important implications for physicians and other health care providers whose clientele consists largely of people from different cultural backgrounds. In addition, these findings highlight the importance of interactions between patient and practitioner in adhering to medical advice.

Interaction of Factors

Researchers have identified dozens of factors, each of which shows some relation to adherence. However, many of these factors account for a very small amount of the variation in adhering to medical advice. To gain a fuller understanding of adherence, researchers must study the mutual influence of factors that affect adherence. For example, patients' beliefs about the disease are related to adherence, but those beliefs are affected by interactions with physicians, another factor that has been identified as influential for adherence. Thus, many of the factors described earlier are not independent of one another. Many of the factors identified as being related to adherence overlap with and influence other factors in complex ways. Therefore, both researchers and practitioners must understand the complex interplay of factors that affect adherence. Furthermore, many of the factors discussed so far are not modifiable. Health psychologists are not only interested in understanding adherence but also in *improving* adherence. In the next section, we focus on theories of adherence that identify these potentially modifiable factors and how they might interact with each other. We will also suggest specific ways to improve adherence.

TABLE 4.1 Factors that Predict Adherence

Factor	Findings	Studies
1. Perceived severity of the disease	People adhere more when they perceive a disease as severe.	DiMatteo et al., 2007
2. Treatment characteristics	People adhere less to treatments that are complex and produce unpleasant side effects.	Applebaum et al., 2009; Ingersoll & Cohen, 2008; Pollack et al., 2010.
3. Age	Complex relationship exists between age and adherence, with younger and older adults adhering less than middle-aged adults.	Thomas et al., 1995
4. Personal factors	Stress and depression predict poorer adherence; conscientiousness predicts better adherence.	Stults-Kolehmainen & Sinha, 2014; DiMatteo et al., 2000; Bogg & Roberts, 2013.
5. Economic factors	People with lower income generally show poorer adherence.	DiMatteo, 2004a; Falagas et al., 2008.
6. Social support	People adhere better when they have strong social support.	DiMatteo, 2004b.
7. Culture	People adhere more to modern medicine when their cultural beliefs support a reliance and trust in modern medicine.	Zyazema, 1984; Kaholokula et al., 2008; Chia et al., 2006.

IN SUMMARY

Several conditions predict poor adherence: (1) the side effects of various medications, (2) long and complicated treatment regimens, (3) personal factors like old or young age, (4) emotional factors such as conscientiousness and emotional problems such as stress and depression, (5) economic barriers to obtaining treatment or paying for prescriptions, (6) a lack of social support, and (7) patients' cultural beliefs that the medical regimen is ineffective. Researchers and practitioners need to understand that the factors identified as influencing adherence interact in complex ways. However, many of these factors may not be easy to change; thus, researchers develop theories of health behavior that identify factors that may be easier to modify.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Consider the medical, personal, and environmental factors that predict adherence. Can you think of a way to use this knowledge to help a person who is having trouble with adherence?

4-3 Why and How Do People Adhere to Healthy Behaviors?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 4-6 Understand the difference between continuum theories and stage theories of health behavior and what they assume about how people change in adherence to health behaviors
- 4-7 Identify the key factors in continuum theories, such as the health belief model, self-efficacy theory, the theory of planned behavior, and behavioral theory
- 4-8 Identify the key factors and stages of stage theories, such as the transtheoretical model and the health action process approach

To intervene to improve people's adherence, it is critical to identify the potentially modifiable factors that

predict adherence. To do this, health psychologists develop theories to understand *why* people make the health decisions they do and *how* they successfully adhere to medical advice. In Chapter 2, we said that useful theories (1) generate research, (2) organize and explain observations, and (3) guide the practitioner in predicting behavior. Theories that successfully identify why people adhere or do not adhere are also useful for practitioners in designing interventions to improve adherence. As you will see in this section, theories of adherence develop over time, as researchers notice the weaknesses of existing theories and propose newer models that account for these weaknesses. Furthermore, theories of health behavior can be classified into two general types—continuum theories and stage theories—each with different assumptions.

Continuum Theories of Health Behavior

Continuum theories were the first class of theories developed to understand health behavior and include the health belief model (Becker & Rosenstock, 1984), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1986, 1997, 2001), the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991), and behavioral theory. **Continuum theories** are a name given to theories that seek to explain adherence with a single set of factors that should apply equally to all people regardless of their existing levels or motivations for adhering. In other words, continuum theories take a “one-size-fits-all” approach. Stage theories, which we will describe later, take a different approach to explaining adherence, by first classifying people into different stages of behavior change and then identifying the unique variables that predict adherence among people in different stages.

The Health Belief Model In the 1950s, tuberculosis was a major health problem. The U.S. Public Health Service initiated a free tuberculosis health-screening program. Mobile units went to neighborhood locations and provided screening X-rays at no charge. Yet very few people took advantage of the convenient and free screening program. Why?

Geoffrey Hochbaum (1958) and his colleagues developed the health belief model to answer this question. Several versions of the health belief model exist; the one that has attracted the most attention is that of Marshall Becker and Irwin Rosenstock (Becker & Rosenstock, 1984).

The model developed by Becker and Rosenstock assumes that beliefs are important contributors to health behavior. This model includes four beliefs that combine to predict health-related behaviors: (1) perceived *susceptibility* to disease or disability, (2) perceived *severity* of the disease or disability, (3) perceived *benefits* of health-enhancing behaviors, and (4) perceived *barriers* to health-enhancing behaviors, including financial costs.

Consider how these factors might motivate a smoker to quit. First, a smoker should believe that smoking increases the likelihood of some disease such as lung cancer or heart disease. Second, the person should believe that such diseases are, indeed, serious. If a person does not believe that smoking leads to diseases or that the diseases are not life-threatening, then there would be little motivation to quit. Third, a person needs to believe that there are obvious benefits to quitting smoking, such as reducing the likelihood of future disease. Lastly, a person needs to believe that there are few barriers to quitting. In other words, quitting smoking would be a relatively painless process. However, smokers often perceive many barriers to quitting, including few other options for managing stress or lack of support from others (Twyman et al., 2014). Thus, a smoking cessation intervention based on the health belief model would seek to educate people on susceptibility to smoking-related diseases, the severity of those diseases, the benefits of quitting, and ways to deal with perceived barriers.

Although the health belief model corresponds with common sense in many ways, common sense does not always predict adherence to health-related behaviors. While some interventions based on the health belief model have been successful at promoting adherence to relatively simple and infrequent behaviors such as mammography screening (Aiken et al., 1994), the health belief model does not predict adherence very well, especially to ongoing, lifestyle behaviors such as smoking cessation. Of the health belief model’s four factors, perceived benefits and barriers are the best predictors of behavior, whereas perceived susceptibility and severity are generally weak predictors of behavior (Carpenter, 2010). Similarly, the factors in the health belief model may be more predictive for some groups than for other groups. For example, susceptibility and severity more strongly predict vaccination for African Americans and European Americans than for Hispanic Americans. For Hispanic Americans, barriers more strongly

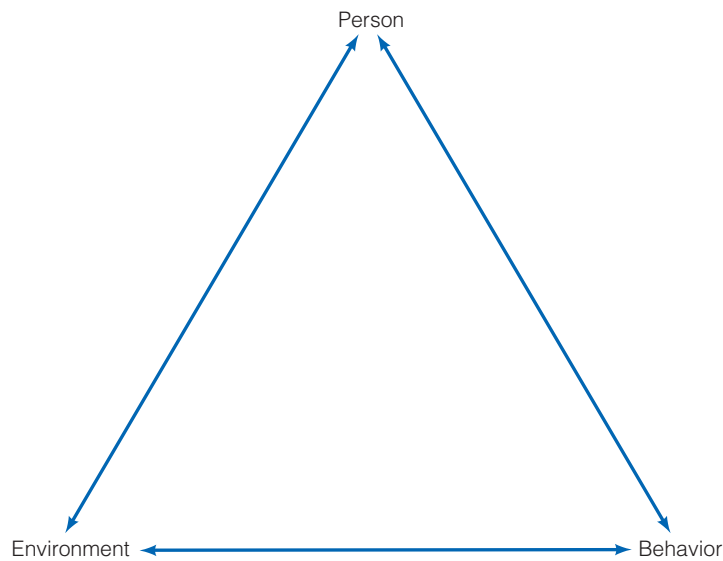


FIGURE 4.1 Bandura's concept of reciprocal determinism. Human functioning is a product of the interaction of behavior, environment, and person variables, especially self-efficacy and other cognitive processes.

Source: Adapted from "The self system in reciprocal determinism," by A. Bandura, 1979, *American Psychologist*, 33, p. 345.

predict vaccination than the other factors (Chen et al., 2007). These ethnic differences point to the importance of other factors omitted by the health belief model.

Some critics (Armitage & Conner, 2000) argue that the health belief model emphasizes motivational factors too heavily and behavioral factors too little, and thus can never be a completely adequate model of health behavior. One of the health belief model's biggest limitations, however, is its omission of beliefs about a person's control over a health behavior.

Self-Efficacy Theory Albert Bandura (1986, 1997, 2001) proposed a social cognitive theory that assumes that humans have some capacity to exercise limited control over their lives. In other words, they use their cognitive processes to pursue goals they view as important and achievable. Bandura suggests that human action results from an interaction of behavior, environment, and person factors, especially people's beliefs. Bandura (1986, 2001) referred to this interactive triadic model as **reciprocal determinism**. The concept of reciprocal determinism can be illustrated by a triangle, with behavior, environment, and person factors occupying the three corners of the triangle and each having some influence on the other two (see [Figure 4.1](#)).

An important component of the person factor is **self-efficacy**, defined by Bandura (2001) as "people's beliefs in their capability to exercise some measure of control over their own functioning and over environmental events" (p. 10). Self-efficacy is a situation-specific rather than a global concept; that is, it refers to people's confidence that they can perform necessary behaviors to produce desired outcomes in a *particular* situation, such as fighting off a temptation to smoke. Bandura (1986) suggested that self-efficacy can be acquired, enhanced, or decreased in one of four ways: (1) performance, or enacting a behavior such as successfully resisting cigarette cravings; (2) vicarious experience, or seeing another person with similar skills perform a behavior; (3) verbal persuasion, or listening to the encouraging words of a trusted person; and (4) physiological arousal states, such as feelings of anxiety or stress, which ordinarily *decrease* self-efficacy.

According to self-efficacy theory, people's beliefs concerning their ability to initiate difficult behaviors (e.g., quitting smoking) predict their likelihood of accomplishing those behaviors. People who think they can do something will try and persist at it; people who do not believe they can do something will not try or will

give up quickly. Also important in self-efficacy theory are **outcome expectations**, which are people's beliefs that those behaviors will produce valuable outcomes, such as lower one's risk for heart problems. According to Bandura's theory, the combination of self-efficacy and outcome expectations plays an important role in predicting behavior. To successfully adhere to a health behavior, people must believe that the behavior will bring about a valuable outcome and that they can successfully carry out the behavior.

Indeed, self-efficacy theory predicts adherence to a variety of health recommendations, including relapse in a smoking cessation program, exercise routine management, diabetes management adherence, and adherence to HIV medication regimens. For example, a study on self-efficacy and smoking relapse (Shiffman et al., 2000) found that, after an initial lapse, smokers with high self-efficacy tended to remain abstinent, whereas those with lower self-efficacy were likely to relapse. Self-efficacy was the best predictor of completing versus dropping out of an exercise rehabilitation program (Guillot et al., 2004) and adhering to an exercise program for cardiac rehabilitation (Schwarzer et al., 2008). One team of researchers (Iannotti et al., 2006) studied diabetes management among adolescents and found self-efficacy to predict better self-management and optimal blood sugar levels. Research with a group of women with AIDS (Ironson et al., 2005) and women and men with HIV/AIDS (Simoni, Frick, & Huang, 2006) found that self-efficacy related to adherence to taking medications as prescribed and to physical indicators of decreased disease severity. Thus, self-efficacy predicts good adherence and good medical outcomes. For this reason, self-efficacy is now incorporated into nearly all health behavior models. However, one limitation of self-efficacy theory is that it focuses chiefly on self-efficacy as a predictor of behavior but omits other factors that also supply a person with motivation for adherence, such as social pressure.

The Theory of Planned Behavior Like self-efficacy theory, the theory of planned behavior assumes that people act in ways that help them achieve important goals. The *theory of planned behavior* (Ajzen, 1985, 1991), one of the most commonly used theories of health behavior, assumes that people are generally reasonable and make systematic use of information when deciding how to behave; they think about the outcome of their actions before making a decision to engage in a particular behavior. They can also choose not to act, if

they believe that an action would move them away from their goal.

According to the theory of planned behavior, the immediate determinant of behavior is the *intention* to act or not to act. Intentions, in turn, are shaped by three factors. The first is a personal evaluation of the behavior—that is, one's *attitude toward the behavior*. One's attitude toward a behavior arises from beliefs that the behavior will lead to positively or negatively valued outcomes. The second factor is one's *perception of how much control* exists over one's behavior (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). Perceived behavioral control is the ease or difficulty one has in achieving desired behavioral outcomes, which reflects both past behaviors and the perceived ability to overcome obstacles. This belief in perceived behavioral control is very similar to Bandura's concept of self-efficacy. The more resources and opportunities people believe they have, the stronger their beliefs that they can control their behavior.

The third factor is one's perception of the social pressure to perform or not perform the action—that is, one's *subjective norm*. The focus on subjective norms is a unique aspect of the theory of planned behavior. A person's subjective norm is shaped by both his or her belief that other people encourage the behavior, as well as their motivation to adhere to the wishes of others. The ShapeUp program described at the start of this chapter sought to increase participants' subjective norm for physical activity and healthy eating by ensuring that friends and coworkers believed that participants should exercise and eat better. Furthermore, by encouraging friendly competition among participants, the ShapeUp program made participants more motivated to live up



Young adults' perception of social norms can influence their behavior.

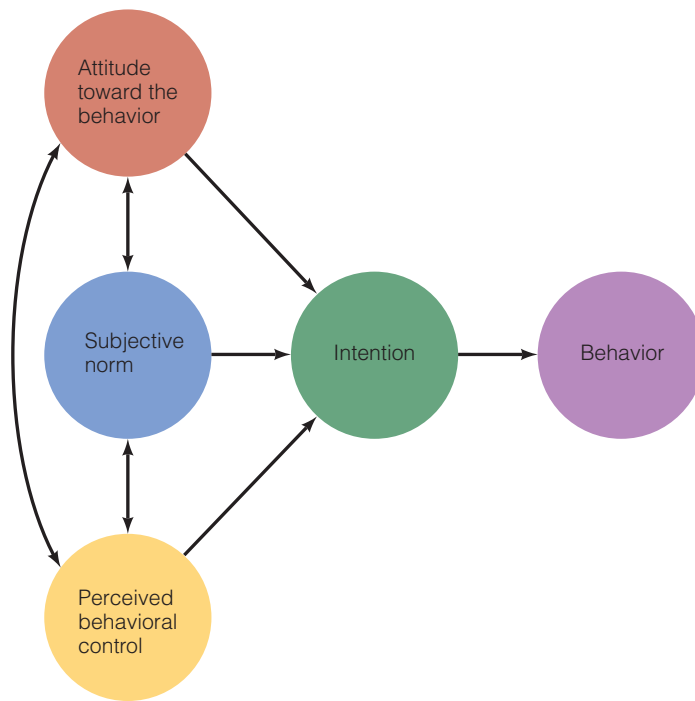


FIGURE 4.2 Theory of planned behavior.

Source: Reprinted from *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50, I. Ajzen, "The Theory of Planned Behavior," p. 182.

to the expectations of fellow teammates! Indeed, two of the best predictors of weight loss in the ShapeUp program were whether other people in one's own team successfully lost weight and one's own perception of strong social influence to lose weight (Leahey et al., 2012) (see also Would You Believe . . . ? box).

Figure 4.2 shows that we can predict a person's behavior from knowledge of a person's (1) attitude toward the behavior, (2) subjective norm, and (3) perceived behavioral control. All three components interact to shape the person's intention to behave.

One strength of the theory of planned behavior is that it identifies beliefs that shape behavior. For example, American men consume less fruits and vegetables than American women. This gender difference relates directly to gender differences in components of the theory of planned behavior; men have less favorable attitudes toward and perceive less control over their ability to eat fruits and vegetables than women do (Emanuel et al., 2012). A study on the topic of premarital sex among Korean university students (Cha et al., 2007) also highlights this theory's strengths and weaknesses. In this study, subjective norms were significant

predictors for both male and female students. However, perceived behavioral control was a factor only for male students. This is because virginity may be a more deliberate choice for Korean men but not for women (Cha et al., 2007). For females, attitudes were more strongly predictive. Thus, the theory of planned behavior was a good model to explain this behavior, but more so for male students. Similarly, a study of fruit and vegetable consumption found that norms were significant predictors of intentions for African American participants but not for European American participants (Blanchard et al., 2009), suggesting that cultural differences exist in how much people are motivated by the expectations of close friends and family. Furthermore, attitudes and intentions tend to be stronger predictors of behavior among people with greater socioeconomic resources, as such individuals may be better able to act in ways that are consistent with their beliefs (Schuz et al, 2020).

Despite these limitations, the theory of planned behavior has been useful in guiding the development of Internet-based interventions for a variety of health behaviors (Webb et al., 2010). A recent meta-analysis of over 200 studies found that the theory of planned

behavior was most successful at predicting physical activity and dietary behaviors (McEachan et al., 2011), but less successful at predicting risk-taking behaviors such as speeding, smoking, and alcohol and drug use, as well as screening, safe sex, and abstinence behaviors. What could account for these differences across types of behavior? For the most part, physical activity and diet represent ongoing, planned, individual choices that the theory of planned behavior was designed to predict. On the other hand, intentions and perceived behavioral control were less likely to predict risk-taking and sexual behaviors because they are likely to be reactions to specific situations rather than planned choices.

Across nearly all behaviors, subjective norms were the weakest predictor of behavior, with two exceptions. Subjective norms more strongly predicted behavior for adolescents compared with adults, and subjective norms more strongly predicted risk-taking behaviors than other behaviors. Thus, subjective norms may be especially important in understanding risk-taking behavior among adolescents, a point we will return to later in this chapter.

Behavioral Theory When people begin to engage in a health behavior, behavioral principles may strengthen or extinguish those behaviors. The *behavioral model* of adherence employs the principles of operant conditioning proposed by B. F. Skinner (1953). The key to operant conditioning is the immediate *reinforcement* of any response that moves the organism (person) toward the target behavior—in this case, following medical recommendations. Skinner found that reinforcement, either positive or negative, strengthens the behavior it follows. With **positive reinforcement**, a positively valued stimulus is added to the situation, thus increasing the probability that the behavior will recur. An example of positive reinforcement of adherent behavior would be a monetary payment contingent on a patient's keeping a doctor's appointment. With **negative reinforcement**, behavior is strengthened by removing an unpleasant or negatively valued stimulus. An example of negative reinforcement would be taking medication to stop your spouse from nagging you about taking your medication.

Punishment also changes behavior by decreasing the chances that a behavior will be repeated, but psychologists seldom use it to modify nonadherent behaviors. The effects of positive and negative reinforcers are quite predictable: They both strengthen behavior. However, the effects of punishment are limited and

sometimes difficult to predict. At best, punishment will inhibit or suppress a behavior, and it can condition strong negative feelings toward any persons or environmental conditions associated with it. Punishment, including threats of harm, is seldom useful in improving a person's adherence to medical advice.

The behavioral model also predicts that adherence will be difficult, because learned behaviors form patterns or habits that often resist change. When a person must make changes in habitual behavior patterns to take medication, change diet or physical activity, or take blood glucose readings several times a day, the individual often has trouble accommodating a new routine. People need help in establishing such changes; advocates of the behavioral model also use cues, rewards, and contingency contracts to reinforce adherent behaviors. Cues include written reminders of appointments, telephone calls from the practitioner's office, and a variety of self-reminders; the ShapeUp online program periodically reminded participants of their health goals. Rewards for adherence can be extrinsic (money and compliments) or intrinsic (feeling healthier); the ShapeUp online program included numerous rewards, including the opportunity for praise or encouragement from team members, or the possibility of beating another team in a competition. Contingency contracts can be verbal, but they are more often written agreements between the practitioner and the patient. In other cases, people can form contracts through online services like DietBet, where they place a bet with friends and earn money back only if they meet their goal. Most adherence models recognize the importance of such incentives and contracts in improving adherence. Research also shows, however, that adherence often drops after incentives are taken away (DeFulio & Silverman, 2012; Mantzari et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2013). Thus, behavioral techniques may be useful in helping people initiate new behaviors, with the hopes that they will eventually translate into habits.

Critique of Continuum Theories In Chapter 2, we suggested that a useful theory should (1) generate significant research, (2) organize and explain observations, and (3) help the practitioner predict and change behaviors. How well do continuum theories meet these three criteria?

First, substantial amounts of research apply continuum theories to understanding adherence. The health belief model has prompted the most research, but a body of evidence exists for all these models.

Second, do these models organize and explain health-related behaviors? In general, all these models do better than chance in explaining and predicting behavior. However, the health belief model and the theory of planned behavior address motivation, attitudes, and intentions, but not actual behavior or behavior change (Schwarzer, 2008). Thus, they are only moderately successful in predicting adherence. The theory of planned behavior, however, does a better job than the health belief model and self-efficacy theory in recognizing the social and environmental pressures influencing behavior, in the form of subjective norms.

Another type of challenge comes from the necessity of relying on instruments to assess the models' various components because such measures are not yet consistent and accurate. The health belief model, for example, might predict health-seeking behavior more accurately if valid measurements existed for each of its components. If a person feels susceptible to a disease, perceives their symptoms to be severe, believes that treatment will be effective, and sees few barriers to treatment, then logically that person should seek health care. But each of these four factors is difficult to assess reliably and validly.

Finally, do continuum theories allow practitioners to predict and change behavior? One strength of continuum theories is that they identify several beliefs that should motivate *anyone* to change his or her behaviors. Thus, continuum theories have guided the development of "one-size-fits-all" interventions that target these beliefs. Despite these strengths, continuum theories also leave out important psychological factors that predict behavior, such as self-identity and anticipated emotions (Rise, Sheeran, & Hukkelberg, 2010; Ravis, Sheeran, & Armitage, 2009). For example, people who simply think about the regret they might experience if they do not enroll in an organ donation program are more likely to enroll than people who think about all the beliefs in the theory of planned behavior combined (O'Carroll et al., 2011).

Lastly, health habits are often very ingrained behaviors and are difficult to change. Indeed, people's past behavior is often a better predictor of their future behavior than any of the beliefs identified in many continuum theories (Ogden, 2003; Sutton, McVey, & Glanz, 1999). Changing people's beliefs about a health behavior may provide motivation, but people often need more concrete steps and skills to translate intention into behavior change (Bryan, Fisher, & Fisher, 2002).

IN SUMMARY

The health belief model includes the concepts of perceived severity of the disease, personal susceptibility, and perceived benefits of and barriers to health-enhancing behaviors. The health belief model has only limited success in predicting health-related behaviors.

Self-efficacy theory emphasizes people's beliefs about their ability to control their own health behaviors. Self-efficacy is one of the most important predictors of health behavior, particularly for behaviors that are relatively difficult to adhere to.

Ajzen's theory of planned behavior focuses on intentional behavior, with the predictors of intentions being attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms. Perceived behavioral control and intentions tend to be the strongest predictors of adherence. Subjective norms also predict behavior and have the strongest influence among adolescents and for risk-taking behaviors.

Behavioral theory focuses on reinforcement and habits that must be changed. When a person's attempts to change behavior are met with rewards, it is more likely that those changes will persist. Rewards can be extrinsic (money and compliments) or intrinsic (feeling healthier). Behavioral theory also recognizes the importance of cues and contracts in improving adherence.

Stage Theories of Health Behavior

Stage theories include the transtheoretical model (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992; Prochaska, Norcross, & DiClemente, 1994), and the health action process approach (Schwarzer, 2008). These models of health behavior differ in several important ways from continuum models. Most importantly, stage models propose that people pass through discrete stages as they attempt to change their behavior. In this way, stage models seem to better describe the *processes* by which people change their behavior than continuum models. Stage models also suggest that different variables will be important depending on what stage a person is in. In this way, stage models differ from continuum models, as people in different stages should benefit from different types of interventions. As you will learn in this section, interventions based on stage theories typically

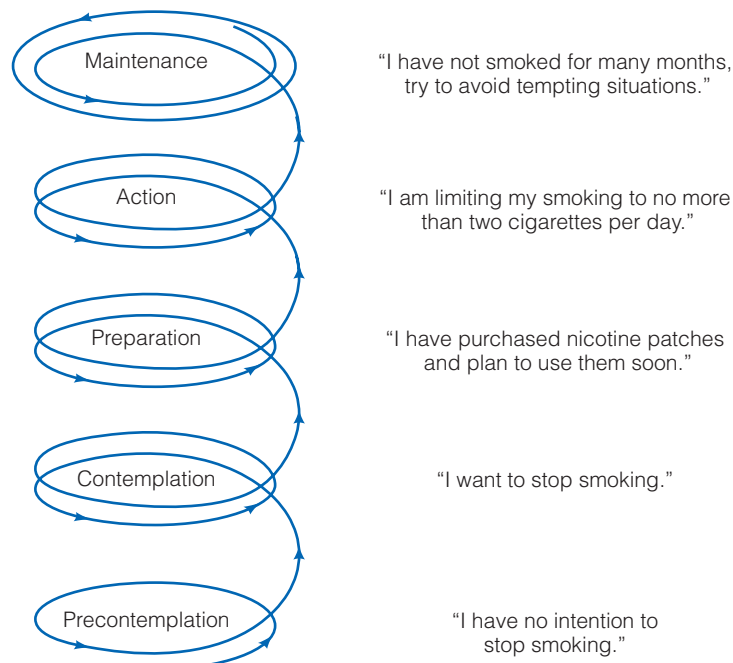


FIGURE 4.3 The transtheoretical model and stages of changing from smoking to stopping smoking.

tailor information to the specific stage that a person is in, rather than employ a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

The Transtheoretical Model The most well-known stage model is the *transtheoretical model*; it cuts across and borrows from other theoretical models. (The *stages-of-change model* is another name for this theory.) The transtheoretical model, developed by James Prochaska, Carlo DiClemente, and John Norcross (1992, 1994), assumes that people progress and regress through five spiraling stages in making changes in behavior: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. A smoker’s progression through these five stages of change in stopping smoking is illustrated in **Figure 4.3**.

During the *precontemplation stage*, the person has no intention of stopping smoking. In the *contemplation stage*, the person is aware of the problem and has thoughts about quitting but has not yet made an effort to change. The *preparation stage* includes both thoughts (such as intending to quit within the next month) and action (such as learning about effective quitting techniques or telling others about intentions). During the *action stage*, the person makes overt changes in behavior, such as stopping smoking or using nicotine

replacement therapy. In the *maintenance stage*, the person tries to sustain the changes previously made and attempts to resist temptation to relapse back into old habits.

Prochaska and his associates maintain that a person moves from one stage to another in a spiral rather than a linear fashion and argue that this model captures the behavioral change process better than other models (Velicer & Prochaska, 2008). Relapses propel people back into a previous stage, or perhaps all the way back to the contemplation or precontemplation stages. From that point, the person may progress several times through the stages until completing behavioral change successfully. Thus, relapses are to be expected and can serve as learning experiences that help a person recycle upward through the various stages.

Prochaska and colleagues (1992, 1994) suggested that people in different stages require different types of assistance to make changes successfully. For example, people in the contemplation and preparation stages should benefit from techniques that raise their awareness of a health problem. In contrast, people in the action and maintenance stages should benefit from strategies that directly address behaviors. Put simply, people in the precontemplation stage need to learn *why*

they should change, whereas people in the contemplation and action stages need to learn *how* to change. People in the maintenance stage need help or information oriented toward preserving their changes.

Research tends to support these contentions. For example, a longitudinal study of adopting a low-fat diet (Armitage et al., 2004) revealed that people's attitudes and behavior fall into the various stages of the transtheoretical model, and individuals both progress through the stages and regress into earlier stages, much as the model predicts. Furthermore, the interventions that moved people from one stage to another varied by stage. Unfortunately, these researchers found that moving people from the preparation to the action stage was more difficult than other transitions. Thus, the transitions from one stage to another may not be equally easy to influence.

Does the transtheoretical model apply equally to different problem behaviors? A meta-analysis of 47 studies (Rosen, 2000) attempted to answer this question by looking at the model across several health-related issues, including smoking, substance abuse, exercise, diet, and psychotherapy. The results showed that the transtheoretical model worked best for understanding smoking cessation when compared with many other health behaviors. For example, in the case of smoking cessation, cognitive processes were more frequently used in deciding to quit, whereas behavioral techniques were more effective when a person was in the process of quitting. However, other reviews of stage-matched interventions for smoking cessation have shown that stage-matched interventions are just as effective as interventions that provide the same information to all people regardless of stage (Cahill, Lancaster, & Green,

2010). Compared with its success in understanding smoking cessation, the transtheoretical model has not been as successful in predicting adherence to other behaviors such as special diets, exercise, or condom use (Bogart & Delahanty, 2004).

The lack of success of stage-matched interventions based on the transtheoretical model may be due to problems with how researchers classify people into stages. For example, the five stages in the transtheoretical model may not represent distinctly different stages (Herzog, 2008). For this reason, some have suggested that stage models with fewer stages may be more accurate and useful (Armitage, 2009). The health action process approach is such a simplified stage model.

The Health Action Process Approach Schwarzer's (2008) *health action process approach* is a more recent model that incorporates some of the most important aspects of both continuum theories and stage theories. The health action process approach can be viewed as a simplified stage model, with two general stages. In the first stage, called the **motivational phase**, a person forms the intention to either adopt a preventive measure or to change a risk behavior. During the motivational phase, three beliefs are necessary for an intention to form. First, people must perceive a personal risk. Second, people must have favorable outcome expectations. Third, people must have a sense of self-efficacy. In the motivational phase, Schwarzer refers to *action self-efficacy*—or the confidence in one's ability to make the change—as being the important belief. Thus, in many ways the motivational phase of the health action process approach resembles many of the continuum models (as shown in [Figure 4.4](#)).

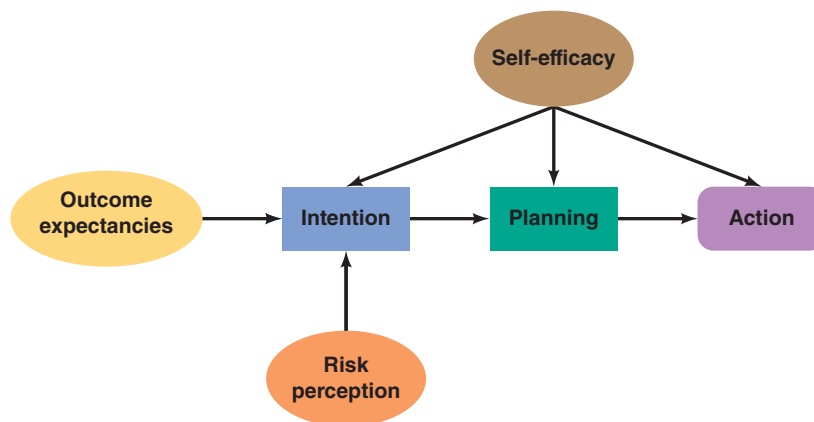


FIGURE 4.4 The health action process approach.

Source: Adapted by permission of Ralf Schwarzer.

However, simply intending to change a behavior is rarely enough to produce lasting change, as anyone who has failed at a New Year's resolution knows. In the second stage, called the **volitional phase**, a person attempts to make the change to his or her behavior, as well as persist in those changes over time. During the volitional phase, a different set of beliefs and strategies become important. For example, planning is crucial during the volitional phase. To lose weight, a person must make detailed plans for what foods to eat, what foods to buy, and where and when to exercise. However, many people who wish to change their behavior may not realize the importance of planning until they have already failed at their goals.

A large web-based study of German adults (Parschau et al., 2012) reveals the importance of planning in promoting physical activity. Among adults who intended to exercise but had not yet started, those who engaged in more planning were more likely to be physically active three weeks later. However, among the adults who had no intention to exercise, planning had little influence; this finding illustrates the stage-specific role that planning plays in adherence. Planning not only includes detailing the “what, where, and when” of adherence but also planning for how to cope with anticipated setbacks. For example, what will a person do if he or she misses an exercise session or experiences pain when exercising? People who anticipate and plan for such setbacks tend to be more successful in pursuing their health goals (Craciun et al., 2012; Evers et al., 2011; Reuter et al., 2010).

Although the health action process approach is not yet studied as widely as other models, many studies support its propositions. Compared with the health belief model and the theory of planned behavior, the health action process approach does a better job of predicting young adults' intentions to resist unhealthy dieting and to perform breast self-exams (Garcia & Mann, 2003).

Critique of Stage Theories How well do stage theories organize and explain observations? Of the stage theories, the transtheoretical model is the most complex. It proposes five stages, as well as 10 different processes that could potentially move people from stage to stage. As some have noted (Armitage, 2009; Herzog, 2008), this degree of complexity may be unnecessary, as more complex stage models may not explain behavior any better than simpler stage models such as the health action process approach.

Do stage theories help a practitioner predict and change behavior? One of the strengths of stage models is that they recognize the benefit of tailoring interventions to a person's stage of behavior change. For example, people who choose to participate in the ShapeUp program are those in the action or maintenance stage (transtheoretical model) or the volitional stage (health action process approach), as they are acting on their intentions to change their behavior. Many of the behavioral techniques used by the ShapeUp program, such as reminder cues and self-monitoring, are useful for people in those stages of the behavior change process.

Regarding the transtheoretical model, the evidence is mixed for whether stage-matched interventions are more effective than non-stage-matched interventions. Regarding the health action process approach, there is more evidence for the effectiveness of stage-matched interventions based on the health action process approach for promoting physical activity (Lippke et al., 2010; Lippke, Ziegelmann, & Schwarzer, 2004) and oral health (Schüz, Sniehotta, & Schwarzer, 2007). However, most studies of stage models use cross-sectional designs, which make it difficult to observe how an individual changes over time. With all stage models, more longitudinal research is needed to evaluate their validity (Ogden, 2003).

Health psychologists who seek to build valid models for health-related behaviors face challenges. One challenge is that health behavior is often determined by factors other than an individual's beliefs or perceptions. Among such factors are poor interpersonal relationships that keep people away from the health care system and public policies (including laws) that affect health behaviors. In addition, certain health-related behaviors, such as cigarette smoking and dental care, can develop into habits that become so automatic that they are largely outside the personal decision-making process. All these factors present challenges for researchers to create theories of health behavior that account for all this variability while also keeping the models as simple and parsimonious as possible.

Most of the models postulate some type of barrier or obstacle to seeking health care, and an almost unlimited number of barriers are possible. Often these barriers are beyond the life experience of researchers. For example, barriers for affluent European Americans may be quite different from those faced by poor Hispanic Americans, Africans living in sub-Saharan Africa, or Hmong immigrants in Canada; thus, the health belief

model and the theory of planned behavior may not apply equally to all ethnic and socioeconomic groups (Poss, 2000). Health behavior theories tend to emphasize the importance of direct and personal control of behavioral choices. Little allowance is made for barriers such as racism and poverty.

IN SUMMARY

Stage models of health behavior classify people into different stages of adherence and suggest that progression through each stage is predicted by different sets of variables. Prochaska's transtheoretical model assumes that people spiral through five stages as they make changes in behavior: precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. Relapse should be expected, but after relapse, people can move forward again through the various stages.

Schwarzer's health action process approach proposes only two general stages: the motivational phase and the volitional phase. Planning and specific forms of self-efficacy are thought to be important factors for helping people translate intentions into lasting behavior change.

Stage models suggest that interventions should use a tailored, stage-matched approach, by only addressing the variables relevant in the person's current stage. Thus, the effectiveness of stage-matched interventions depends in part on how well practitioners can classify people into discrete stages. One criticism of the transtheoretical model is that the five stages do not represent discrete stages, and people in different stages may be more like each other than the theory suggests. This may explain why there is only mixed support for stage-matched interventions based on the transtheoretical model.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Consider a health behaviour that you would like to improve. Using each of the theories described in this section, develop a plan addressing the factors in each of the theories. Which theory do you believe would be most successful in helping you improve your adherence?

4-4 The Intention–Behavior Gap

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 4-9** Recognize how two factors—behavioral willingness and implementational intentions—can help explain why some intentions translate into action, whereas other intentions do not

Stage models acknowledge what many of us already know from our own experiences—that even our best intentions do not always translate into behavior. This “intention–behavior gap” (Sheeran, 2002) is exemplified by people who intend to behave healthily but do not. In this section, we describe models and strategies that help understanding the reasons for this intention–behavior gap, as well as ways to help bridge this gap.

Behavioral Willingness

In some situations, strong social pressures are capable of derailing the best of intentions. A person may have a sexual encounter with every intention of using a condom or embark on a night out on the town with the intent of resisting binge drinking. At some point in the evening, however, the person may forget these intentions altogether. **Behavioral willingness** refers to a person's motivation *at a given moment* to engage in a risky behavior (Gibbons et al., 1998). Behavioral willingness reflects more of a *reaction* to a situation than a deliberate, planned choice. This concept of behavioral willingness is helpful in understanding a number of adolescent risk-taking behaviors, such as smoking, alcohol use, and lack of safe sex practices (Andrews et al., 2008; Gibbons et al., 1998). In these studies, intention and willingness relate to each other, showing that people with stronger intentions tend to report less of a willingness to engage in risky behaviors “in the moment.” However, behavioral willingness is a unique predictor of actual behavior. In other words, if you take two people with equally strong intentions to avoid risky behaviors, the person with the greater willingness will be the one whose intentions will ultimately fall short.

What drives people's willingness to engage in risky behaviors? Many times, people's concern about their social image is what leads to the willingness to engage



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People may intend to avoid risky behaviors, but strong social pressures often make them willing to engage in them.

in risky behavior. When people have positive images of others who engage in risky behaviors, they are more likely to report a willingness to engage in those behaviors (Gibbons et al., 1998). In turn, that willingness can break down the best of intentions.

Implementational Intentions

As emphasized in the health action process approach, planning is an important factor in translating intention into action. A growing body of research shows that short and simple planning exercises can help people adhere to

medical advice. **Implementational intentions** are specific plans that people can make that identify not only *what* they intend to do but also *where*, *when*, and *how*. In essence, implementational intentions connect a situation with the goal that the person wants to achieve. For example, someone who wants to exercise more could form an implementational intention of “I will run 30 minutes immediately after work on Tuesday evening.” In this way, implementational intentions go beyond the intention of “I plan to exercise more.” Over time, it is thought that forming implementational intentions can help make people’s pursuit of their goals more automatic.

Would You BELIEVE...?

Both Real and Online Social Networks Can Influence Health

How much do our social networks influence our health behaviors? While it’s tempting to think of a person’s health as mainly a reflection of his or her personal preferences, behavior is also strongly related to a person’s social network: both real and online. What kind of people tend to influence our behaviors the most, and what kind of people do

we look toward for inspiration and influence?

Using a rich longitudinal dataset from the Framingham Heart Study, Nicholas Christakis examined the influence of our real social networks on health behaviors by tracking how health behaviors, such as smoking and obesity, spread through social networks over a period of three decades.

The study collected health information from over 5,000 adults as well as 8 to 10 of their closest family members, friends, and co-workers. Christakis found that a person’s chances of becoming obese or quitting smoking were significantly predicted by what occurred in one’s immediate social network. For example, if a person’s spouse became obese or quit

smoking, that person's chances of also becoming obese or quitting smoking increased by nearly 60% (Christakis & Fowler, 2007, 2008)! Clearly, spouses had a strong influence on a person's health, but siblings, friends, and even co-workers also had a noticeable influence on people's health. Thus, a person's health was closely tied to the health of those around them, either for better (smoking cessation) or for worse (obesity).

Could our online social networks also influence health? In a series of clever studies, Damon Centola examined how health behaviors could spread through an online social network. Centola teamed up with a fitness-promoting website, where upon registration, users would be assigned a number of "neighbors" who were also users of the site. Users could also choose to "friend" new neighbors

or "unfriend" existing neighbors from their network. How did people select who to add or remove from their network? Interestingly, Centola found that users overwhelmingly chose to add neighbors who were *similar* to them—especially in terms of age, gender, and body mass index (BMI)—and to drop neighbors who were dissimilar (Centola & van de Rijt, 2015). In short, people didn't choose to associate with people who might have been fitter or more "aspirational." Rather, they chose to associate with people like themselves.

Could this tendency toward *homophily* (associating with people who are similar) have a detrimental influence on people who are not fit? To test this idea, Centola (2011) set up a fitness social network site in which a user's neighbors were either assigned randomly or assigned so

that they were similar in age, gender, and BMI to the user. Centola then had one neighbor in everyone's network make mention of a new diet plan, and Centola tracked how interest in the diet spread through the networks. Not surprisingly, interest in the diet spread more rapidly in the homophilic networks than in the random networks. In other words, a network had greater influence if the people in the networks were like each other. More importantly, it didn't matter if a user was less fit and therefore surrounded by friends who were also less fit. The interest in the diet plan spread as rapidly among "fit" networks as it did among "less fit" networks. Thus, these results suggest that online social networks can have positive influences on health, even among people who may have the greatest health risks.

Indeed, simple implementational intentions exercises are effective in helping people to adhere to a wide variety of health behaviors. These include one-time behaviors such as cervical cancer screening (Sheeran & Orbell, 2000) and breast self-exam (Orbell, Hodgkins, & Sheeran, 1997). Implementational intentions also make it more likely that people engage in behaviors that require action over time, such as taking vitamin supplements and medications (Brown, Sheeran, & Rueber, 2009; Sheeran & Orbell, 1999), increasing physical activity (Robinson et al., 2018; Silva et al., 2018), eating healthily (Armitage, 2004; Verplanken & Faes, 1999), smoking cessation (Armitage, 2016), and resisting substance use and binge drinking (Malaguti et al., 2020; Norman et al., 2019).

Why do implementation intentions work? One reason is that they make people less likely to forget their intentions. For example, in a study of cervical cancer screening, 74% of participants scheduled their appointment on the very date they had specified in their implementation intention exercise (Sheeran & Orbell, 2000). Thus, implementational intentions can help turn "intenders" into "actors."

IN SUMMARY

Many people fail to adhere because their intentions do not translate into behavior. For some people, this may occur because of *behavioral willingness*, which represents a person's willingness to engage in risky behaviors at a given moment. Behavioral willingness can put people at risk of nonadherence when strong social pressures exist. People may also not adhere because they do not plan adequately. *Implementational intentions* represent specific plans that link a situation with the enactment of a behavior and can boost adherence to a variety of health behaviors.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Select a health behavior that you have had trouble adhering to. Take about 10 minutes to create some implementational intentions that connect specific situations with actions that can help with your adherence. After a week, consider the effects of these implementational intentions. Did they help? Why or why not?

4-5 Improving Adherence

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 4-10** Understand the difference between educational and behavioral strategies in improving adherence
- 4-11** Identify several behavioral strategies that have been used to improve adherence

In this chapter, we have surveyed several issues related to adherence, including theoretical models that might explain or predict adherence, techniques for measuring adherence, the frequency of adherence, and factors relating to adherence. This information, along with knowledge of why some people fail to adhere, can help answer an important question: How can adherence be improved?

Methods for improving adherence can generally be divided into (1) educational and (2) behavioral strategies. Educational procedures are those that impart information, sometimes in an emotion-arousing manner designed to frighten the nonadherent patient into becoming adherent. Included with educational strategies are procedures such as health education messages, individual patient counseling with various professional health care providers, programmed instruction, lectures, demonstrations, and individual counseling accompanied by written instructions. Haynes (1976) reported that strategies that relied on education and threats of disastrous consequences for nonadherence were only marginally effective in bringing about a meaningful change in patients' behaviors; more recent reviews (Harrington, Noble, & Newman, 2004; Schroeder, Fahey, & Ebrahim, 2007) come to similar conclusions. Educational methods may increase patients' knowledge, but behavioral approaches offer a more effective way of enhancing adherence. People, it seems, fail to adhere not because they do not know better, but because adherent behavior is less appealing or difficult to enact.

Behavioral strategies focus more directly on changing the behaviors involved in compliance. They include a wide variety of techniques, such as notifying patients of upcoming appointments, simplifying medical schedules, providing cues to prompt taking medication,

monitoring and rewarding patients' compliant behaviors, and shaping people toward self-monitoring and self-care. Behavioral techniques are typically more effective than educational strategies in improving patient adherence, particularly for people who know *why* they should change their behavior but may not know *how*. Indeed, one reason why the ShapeUp program may have been so successful is that it included several behavioral strategies, such as reminders and self-monitoring of physical activity. Self-monitoring is known to be one of the most powerful techniques to improve one's diet and physical activity (Michie et al., 2009).

Adherence researchers Robin DiMatteo and Dante DiNicola (1982) recommended four categories of behavioral strategies for improving adherence, and their categories are still a valid way to approach the topic. First, various *prompts* can be used to remind patients to initiate health-enhancing behaviors. These prompts may be cued by regular events in the patient's life, such as taking medication before each meal, or they may take the form of telephone calls from a clinic to remind the person to keep an appointment or to refill a prescription. Another type of prompt comes in the form of reminder packaging, which presents information about the date or time that the medication should be taken on the packaging for the medication (Heneghan, Glasziou, & Perera, 2007). In addition, electronic technology such as text messaging or smartphone apps can be useful in providing prompts.

A second behavioral strategy proposed by DiMatteo and DiNicola is *tailoring the regimen*, which involves fitting the treatment to habits and routines in the patient's daily life. For example, pill organizers work toward this goal by making medication more compatible with the person's life; some drug companies are creating medication packaging, called *compliance packaging*, that is akin to pill organizers in providing a tailored regimen (Gans & McPhillips, 2003). Another approach that fits within this category is simplifying the medication schedule; a review of adherence studies (Schroeder et al., 2007) indicated that this approach was among the most successful in increasing adherence.

Another way to tailor the regimen involves assessing important characteristics of the patient—such as personality or stages of change—and orienting change-related messages to these characteristics (Gans & McPhillips, 2003; Sherman, Updegraff, & Mann,



Finding effective prompts helps patients fit medication into their schedules.

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2008). For example, a person in the contemplation stage is aware of the problem but has not yet decided to adopt a behavior (see Figure 4.2). This person might benefit from an intervention that includes information or counseling, whereas a person in the maintenance stage would not. Instead, people in the maintenance stage might benefit from monitoring devices or prompts that remind them to take their medication or to exercise. Applying this approach to the problem of preventing the complications that accompany heart disease, a group of researchers (Turpin et al., 2004) concluded that tailoring adherence programs to patients' previous levels of adherence is critical; patients who are mostly adherent differ from those who are partially adherent or nonadherent. These successes suggest that different stages of readiness to change require different types of assistance to achieve adherence.

A similar way to tailor the regimen involves helping clients resolve the problems preventing them from changing their behavior. **Motivational interviewing** is a therapeutic approach originating from substance abuse treatment programs (Miller & Rollnick, 2002) but has been applied to many other health-related behaviors, including medication adherence, physical activity, diet, and diabetes management (Martins & McNeil, 2009). This technique attempts to change a client's motivation and prepares the client to enact changes in behavior. The procedure includes an interview in which the practitioner attempts to show empathy with the client's situation; discusses and clarifies the client's goals and

contrasts them with the client's current, unacceptable behavior; and helps the client formulate ways to change behavior. Reviews indicate that the technique is effective, particularly for motivating people to stop smoking (Lai, Cahill, Qin, & Tang, 2010; Lundahl & Burke, 2009; Martins & McNeil, 2009).

Third, DiMatteo and DiNicola suggested a *graduated regimen implementation* that reinforces successive approximations to the desired behavior. Such shaping procedures would be appropriate for exercise, diet, and possibly smoking cessation programs, but not for taking medications.

The final behavioral strategy listed by DiMatteo and DiNicola is a *contingency contract* (or behavioral contract)—an agreement, usually written, between patients and health care professionals that provides for some kind of reward for patients contingent on their achieving compliance. These contracts may also involve penalties for noncompliance (Gans & McPhillips, 2003). Contingency contracts are most effective when they are enacted at the beginning of therapy and when the provisions are negotiated and agreed upon by patients and providers. Even with these provisions, contracts have not been demonstrated to boost adherence by a great deal (Bosch-Capblanch et al., 2007), and any beneficial effects on adherence are likely to dissipate after the contract is complete (Mantzari et al., 2015).

Despite these suggestions, many health care providers put little effort into improving adherence. In addition, adherence rates have improved little over the past 50 years (DiMatteo, 2004a). Evidence indicates that clear instructions about taking medications are the best strategy to boost adherence for short-term regimens (Haynes, McDonald, & Garg, 2002); the instructions work better if they are both verbal and in writing (Johnson, Sandford, & Tyndall, 2007). For long-term regimens, many strategies show some effectiveness, but none offer dramatic improvement (Haynes et al., 2008). Furthermore, the interventions that demonstrate greater effectiveness tend to be complex and costly. Therefore, adherence remains a costly problem, both in terms of the cost in lives and ill health of failures and in terms of the added costs of even marginally effective interventions. Despite these challenges, addressing the issue of nonadherence is an ongoing task in the field of health psychology.

IN SUMMARY

Effective programs to improve compliance rates frequently include cues to signal the time for taking medication, clearly written instructions, simplified medication regimens, prescriptions tailored to the patient's daily schedule, and rewards for compliant behavior. Despite these effective strategies, the problem of nonadherence remains a major challenge for the health psychologist.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Consider the strategies for improving adherence described in this section. What factors in the theories of behaviour change, described earlier in this chapter, do these strategies seem to address best?



BECOMING HEALTHIER

You can improve your health by following sound health-related advice. Here are some things you can do to make adherence pay off.

1. Adopt an overall healthy lifestyle—one that includes not smoking, using alcohol in moderation or not at all, eating a diet high in fiber and low in saturated fats, getting an optimum amount of regular physical activity, and incorporating safety into your life. Procedures for adopting each of these health habits are discussed in *Becoming Healthier* boxes in Chapters 12 through 15. Action Plan: Develop and write down a plan for how you could improve your adherence to each of the behaviors above. Remember that some recommendations such as beginning a regular exercise program should be adopted gradually. If you do too much the first day, you won't feel like exercising again the next day. Make specific plans for when and how you will act to achieve your goals. Research on implementational intentions shows that simple exercises are effective in helping people adhere.

2. Establish a working alliance with your physician that is based on cooperation, not obedience. You and your doctor are the two most important people involved in your health, and the two of you should cooperate in designing your health practices.

Action Plan: Make regular check-ups and exams a part of your plans. Prior to any appointment, prepare a list of concerns and questions that you would like to discuss with your physician. If you receive a prescription, ask the doctor about possible side effects—you don't want an unanticipated unpleasant side effect to be an excuse to stop taking the medication. Also, be sure you know how long you must take the medication—some chronic diseases require a lifetime of treatment.

3. Clarify any recommendations given by a physician. Action Plan: If your physician gives complex medical information that you or someone you know doesn't comprehend, ask for clarification in a way that you can understand. Enlist the cooperation of a pharmacist, who can

be another valuable health care provider.

4. Another important person interested in your health is your spouse, parent, friend, or sibling. Enlist the support of a significant person or persons in your life. High levels of social support improve one's rate of adherence.

Action Plan: If you have a health goal that you believe may be difficult to achieve, ask a trusted person to assist you in the process, whether it be by providing support and encouragement, or by providing some accountability.

5. Find a practitioner who understands and appreciates your cultural beliefs, ethnic background, language, and religious beliefs. Action Plan: Ask people you know for recommendations of physicians who are known to work well with people who are similar to you.
6. Use positive reinforcement. Reward yourself for following your good health practices. Action Plan: If you faithfully followed your diet or exercise plan for a day or a week, do something nice for yourself!

Questions

This chapter addresses six basic questions:

1. What is adherence, how is it measured, and how frequently does it occur?

Adherence is the extent to which a person's behavior coincides with appropriate medical and health advice. For people to profit from medical advice, first, the advice must be accurate; and second, the patients must follow the advice. When people do not adhere to sound health behaviors, they may risk serious health problems or even death. As many as 125,000 people in the United States die each year because of adherence failures.

Researchers can measure adherence in at least six ways: (1) asking the practitioner, (2) asking the patient, (3) asking other people, (4) monitoring medicine use, (5) examining biochemical evidence, and (6) using any combination of these procedures. Of these, physician judgment is the least valid, but each of the others also has serious flaws; a combination of procedures provides the best assessment.

These different methods of assessment complicate the determination of the frequency of nonadherence. However, an analysis of more than 500 studies revealed that the average rate of nonadherence is around 25%, with people on medication regimens more adherent than those who must change health-related behaviors.

2. What factors predict adherence?

The severity of a disease does not predict adherence, but unpleasant or painful side effects of medication do lower adherence. Some personal factors relate to adherence, but a nonadherent personality does not exist. Age shows a curvilinear relationship, with older adults, children, and adolescents experiencing problems in adhering to medication regimens, but gender shows little overall effect. Emotional factors such as stress, anxiety, and depression lower adherence, but conscientiousness improves adherence. Personal beliefs are a significant factor, with beliefs in a regimen's ineffectiveness lowering adherence and self-efficacy beliefs increasing adherence.

A person's life situation also affects adherence. Lower income endangers adherence; people are not able to pay for treatment or medications. Higher income levels and greater social support generally increase adherence. Individuals with a cultural background that fails to accept Western medicine are less likely to adhere. Ethnicity may also affect the treatment that patients receive from practitioners, and people who feel discriminated against adhere at lower rates. No one factor accounts for adherence, so researchers must consider a combination of factors.

3. What are continuum theories of health behavior? How do they explain adherence?

Continuum theories of health behavior identify variables that should predict the likelihood a person will adhere to a healthy behavior. Continuum theories propose that the variables should predict adherence in the same manner for all individuals.

The health belief model focuses on people's beliefs in perceived susceptibility to a health problem, perceived severity of the problem, perceived benefits of adhering to a behavior, and perceived barriers to adherence. Self-efficacy theory focuses on beliefs about people's confidence that they can control adherence, as well as their beliefs that adherence will bring about good outcomes. The theory of planned behavior focuses on people's attitudes toward a behavior, their beliefs about subjective norms, and their perceived behavioral control as predictors of intentions. Behavioral theory explains adherence in terms of reinforcement and habits that must be changed. Rewards and reinforcements can help a person to initiate a behavior, as well as maintain it over time. Behavioral theory also recognizes the importance of cues and contracts in improving adherence.

Continuum theories generate a large amount of research across a wide variety of behaviors and are typically successful at predicting people's motivations to adhere to health behaviors. However, they neglect behavioral factors, so they are often

better at predicting people's motivations and intentions than they are at predicting behavior.

4. What are stage theories of health behavior? How do they explain adherence?

Stage theories propose that people progress through discrete stages in the process of changing their behavior, and that different variables will be important depending on what stage a person is in. The transtheoretical model proposes that people progress in spiral fashion through five stages in making changes in behavior—precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. People in the earlier stages of contemplation and preparation are thought to benefit more from techniques that raise their awareness of a health problem, such as education or motivational interviewing. In contrast, people in the later stages of action and maintenance should benefit most from strategies that directly address behaviors.

The health action process approach proposes two stages: a motivational phase and a volitional phase. Perceived susceptibility, self-efficacy, and outcome expectations are the important factors in the motivational phase. Planning and self-efficacy are the important factors in the volitional phase.

The success of stage theories in predicting and changing behavior rests on having accurate and valid methods of assessing a person's stage of behavior change. All theories—continuum and stage theories—are useful for understanding adherence but limited by their omission of various social, economic, ethnic, and other demographic factors that also affect people's health behavior.

5. What is the intention–behavior gap, and what factors predict whether intentions are translated into behavior?

The intention–behavior gap refers to the fact that intentions are imperfect predictors of adherence. Behavioral willingness refers to a person's motivation at a given moment to engage in a risky behavior and is driven largely by social pressures in a specific situation. Poor planning can also explain

why intentions are not always translated into behavior. Implementational intentions are effective planning exercises that help people identify the specific situations in which they will perform a specific behavior.

6. How can adherence be improved?

Methods for improving adherence can generally be divided into educational and behavioral strategies. Educational methods may increase patients' knowledge, but behavioral approaches are better at enhancing adherence. Strategies for enhancing adherence fall into four approaches: (1) providing prompts, (2) tailoring the regimen, (3) implementing the regimen gradually, and (4) making a contingency contract. Effective programs frequently include clearly written as well as clear verbal instructions, simple medication schedules, follow-up calls for missed appointments, prescriptions tailored to the patient's daily schedule, rewards for compliant behavior, and cues to signal the time for taking medication.

Suggested Readings

- Bogart, L. M., & Delahanty, D. L. (2004). Psychosocial models. In T. J. Boll, R. G. Frank, A. Baum, & J. L. Wallander (Eds.), *Handbook of clinical health psychology: Vol. 3: Models and perspectives in health psychology* (pp. 201–248). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. This review of models of health-related behaviors critically examines the health belief model and theories of reasoned action and planned behavior. The review is oriented around an evaluation of how well these models predict important health behaviors, including condom use, exercise, smoking, and dieting.
- DiMatteo, M. R. (2004). Variations in patients' adherence to medical recommendations: A quantitative review of 50 years of research. *Medical Care*, 42, 200–209. DiMatteo analyzes more than 500 studies published over a span of 50 years to determine factors that relate to failures in adherence. Her concise summary of these results reveals the relative

contribution of demographic factors as well as illness characteristics.

Schwarzer, R. (2008). Modeling health behavior change: How to predict and modify the adoption and maintenance of health behaviors. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 57, 1–29. This review outlines

the health action process approach, and its application to understanding both the adoption and the maintenance of several health behaviors, such as physical activity, breast self-examination, seat belt use, dietary change, and dental flossing.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 5-1** Identify the parts of the nervous system responsible for the physiological stress response, as well as the key neurotransmitters involved
- 5-2** Identify the parts of the endocrine system responsible for the physiological stress response, as well as the key hormones involved
- 5-3** Understand Selye's perspective on stress, and the stages of the general adaptation syndrome
- 5-4** Understand Lazarus's transactional view of stress, and his emphasis on the role of an individual's appraisals in the stress process
- 5-5** Recognize the various types of experiences that cause stress in people's lives, ranging from cataclysmic events to daily hassles
- 5-6** Understand the three major methods of measuring stress, as well as the strengths and limitations of each approach
- 5-7** Understand why the personal resources of social support, personal control, and optimism are beneficial when dealing with stress
- 5-8** Distinguish problem-focused, emotion-focused and social coping strategies
- 5-9** Understand the aims of four major types of behavioral interventions for managing stress
- 5-10** Evaluate the effectiveness of each type of behavioral intervention

CHAPTER 5

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of COVID-19 Pandemic

The Nervous System and the Physiology of Stress

- The Peripheral Nervous System
- The Neuroendocrine System
- Physiology of the Stress Response

Theories of Stress

- Selye's View
- Lazarus's View

Sources of Stress

- Cataclysmic Events
- Life Events
- Daily Hassles

Measurement of Stress

- Methods of Measurement

Coping with Stress

- Personal Resources That Influence Coping
- Personal Coping Strategies

Behavioral Interventions for Managing Stress

- Relaxation Training
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
- Emotional Disclosure
- Mindfulness

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on six basic questions:

1. What is the physiology of stress?
2. What theories explain stress?
3. What sources produce stress?
4. How is stress measured?
5. What factors influence coping, and what strategies are effective?
6. What behavioral techniques are effective for stress management?

Defining, Measuring, and Managing Stress

Stress is a reality of life. The causes of stress are widespread and include major life-changing events such as death of a loved one, unemployment, and catastrophes such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Hurricane Katrina, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Seemingly minor hassles such as relationship breakups and transportation problems can be ongoing sources of stress. Even people who are expert in handling some kinds of stress, such as emergency room physicians, may find other forms of stress difficult. This chapter looks at what stress is, how it can be measured, some of the effective and ineffective strategies that people use to cope, and some behavioral management techniques that can help people cope more effectively. Chapter 6 examines the question of whether stress can cause illness and even death. In this chapter, we first look at the physiological bases of stress.

5-1 The Nervous System and the Physiology of Stress

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 5-1 Identify the parts of the nervous system responsible for the physiological stress response, as well as the key neurotransmitters involved
- 5-2 Identify the parts of the endocrine system responsible for the physiological stress response, as well as the key hormones involved

Stress is a psychological experience that easily gets “under the skin” to influence how our bodies function. To understand the physiological effects of stress, we must first understand several aspects of the nervous and endocrine systems.

The effects of stress on the body result from our nervous system's responses to our environment. The human nervous



Check HEALTH RISKS

Life Events Scale for Students

Has this stressful event happened to you at any time during the last four months? If it has, please check the box next to it. If it has not, leave it blank.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death of a parent (100) | <input type="checkbox"/> Failing several courses (56) | <input type="checkbox"/> Minor financial problems (32) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Death of your best or closest friend (91) | <input type="checkbox"/> Seeking psychological or psychiatric consultation (56) | <input type="checkbox"/> Losing a part-time job (31) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time in jail (80) | <input type="checkbox"/> Seriously thinking about dropping out of college (55) | <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation with parents (27) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pregnancy, either yourself or being the father (78) | <input type="checkbox"/> Failing a course (53) | <input type="checkbox"/> Finding a part-time job (25) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Major car accident (car wrecked, people injured) (77) | <input type="checkbox"/> Major argument with boy/girlfriend (53) | <input type="checkbox"/> Family get-togethers (25) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Major personal injury or illness (75) | <input type="checkbox"/> Major argument with parents (48) | <input type="checkbox"/> Minor violation of the law (e.g., speeding ticket) (24) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Break-up of parent's marriage/divorce (70) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex difficulties with boy/girlfriend (48) | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting your own car (21) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Getting kicked out of college (68) | <input type="checkbox"/> Beginning an undergraduate program at university (47) | <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation alone/with friends (16) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Major change of health in close family member (68) | <input type="checkbox"/> Moving away from home (46) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Break-up with boy/girlfriend (65) | <input type="checkbox"/> Moving out of town with parents (44) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Major and/or chronic financial problems (63) | <input type="checkbox"/> Change of job (43) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent losing a job (57) | <input type="checkbox"/> Minor car accident (42) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Losing a good friend (57) | <input type="checkbox"/> Switch in program within same college or university (37) | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Getting an unjustified low grade on a test (36) | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Establishing new steady relationship with partner (35) | |

For all of the items you checked, add up the numbers in parentheses next to the items. Healthy undergraduate students, on average, have total scores around 190. Clearly, college students experience stress in their lives. However, as scores increase, so do people's risk of health problems. For example, people with scores of 300 and higher have a very high risk of a serious health change within two years. This chapter explores why stressful life events such as those listed in this checklist can worsen physical health.

Source: Reprinted from *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol. 20, issue 6. Clements, K., & Turpin, G., The life events scale for students: Validation for use with British Samples, 747–751, 1996.

system contains billions of individual cells called **neurons**, which function electrochemically. Within each neuron, electrically charged ions hold the potential for an electrical discharge. The discharge of this potential produces a small electrical current, which travels the length of the neuron. The electrical charge leads to the release of chemicals called **neurotransmitters**, which are manufactured within each neuron and stored in vesicles at the ends of the neurons. The released neurotransmitters diffuse across the **synaptic cleft**, the space between neurons. Thus, neurotransmitters are the primary ways that neurons communicate with each other.

Billions of neurons make up the nervous system, which is organized in a hierarchy with major divisions and subdivisions. The two major divisions of the

nervous system are the **central nervous system (CNS)** and the **peripheral nervous system (PNS)**. The CNS consists of the brain and the spinal cord. The PNS consists of all other neurons, which extend from the spinal cord to all other parts of the body. **Figure 5.1** illustrates these divisions and subdivisions of the nervous system.

The Peripheral Nervous System

The PNS, that part of the nervous system lying outside the brain and spinal cord, is divided into two parts: the **somatic nervous system** and the **autonomic nervous system (ANS)**. The somatic nervous system primarily serves the skin and the voluntary muscles. The ANS



Real-World Profile of COVID-19 PANDEMIC



aidar nurkovic/Shutterstock.com

Very often, stress is a uniquely individual experience, in which we feel that few others can understand or relate to the turmoil in our lives. But at the start of 2020, the entire world began to share the experience of the same stressor, the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a matter of weeks, the novel coronavirus spread across the globe and killed hundreds of thousands of people. Family members who lost loved ones and healthcare workers on the frontlines experienced the most tragic aspects of the pandemic. Those who had not caught the virus worried about catching it or passing it on to loved ones. Schools sent students home. Businesses closed their doors.

Hospitals in the most hard-hit areas could not keep up with numbers of people needing urgent treatment. Governments issued stay-at-home orders and stock markets collapsed. Millions of people lost their jobs.

The stress levels of Americans reached peak levels during this time (APA, 2020), as they also likely did across the world. Economic security was one of the most significant sources of stress for Americans as a whole. Yet, some people felt the stress more than others. Parents with school-aged children felt especially high levels of stress, as they juggled the multiple roles of parent, employee (if they were lucky enough to keep their job), and at-home teacher. Racial and ethnic minorities, much more than whites, were stressed by multiple aspects of the pandemic, including the risk of getting infected with coronavirus, having basic needs met, and accessing health care services. The toll of COVID-19 on minorities and those of lower socioeconomic status was greatest. In both the United States and the United Kingdom, Blacks and other ethnic minority groups appeared to be at greatest risk of mortality from COVID-19 (Aldridge et al., 2020; Hooper et al., 2020).

The stay-at-home orders that many governments imposed also prevented people from doing many of the things that typically help during times of stress, such as recreation or spending time with family and friends. Due to both the stress of the pandemic and the loss of many typical means of coping with stress, rates of anxiety and depression increased, as did the use of prescription medications for managing these mental health conditions (Express Scripts, 2020). For example, in late April and early May 2020, approximately one in three Americans reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, triple the number of people who reported such symptoms prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (CDC, 2020b). Rates of anxiety and depression were highest among younger adults, women, and the poor.

The COVID-19 pandemic is an example of a widespread, cataclysmic stressor, in which entire communities, countries or the world experience the same stressful event. However, people's individual experiences of stress depended on how the pandemic affected them personally. This chapter introduces you to the concept of stress, the varieties of stress that exist in our lives, and the impact it can have on our physical health.

primarily serves internal organs and is therefore important in understanding responses to stress.

The ANS allows for a variety of responses through its two divisions: the **sympathetic nervous system** and the **parasympathetic nervous system**. These two subdivisions differ anatomically as well as functionally. They, along with their target organs, appear in **Figure 5.2**.

The sympathetic division of the ANS mobilizes the body's resources in emergency, stressful, and emotional

situations. The reactions include an increase in the rate and strength of heart contractions, increase in rate of breathing, constriction of blood vessels in the skin, a decrease of gastrointestinal activity, stimulation of the sweat glands, and dilation of the pupils in the eyes. Many of these physiological changes serve to direct the flow of blood and oxygen to the skeletal muscles, enabling the organism to mount a quick motor response to a potentially threatening event.

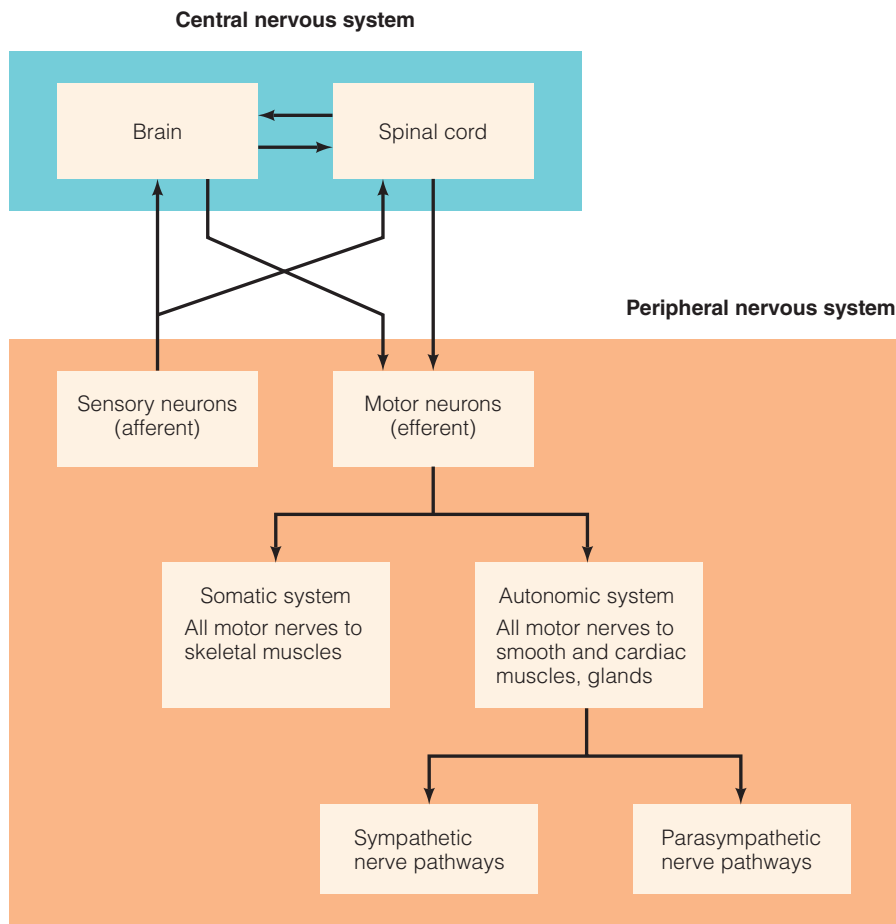


FIGURE 5.1 Divisions of the human nervous system.

The parasympathetic division of the ANS, on the other hand, promotes relaxation, digestion, and normal growth functions. The parasympathetic nervous system is active under normal, nonstressful conditions. The parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems serve the same target organs, but they tend to function reciprocally, with the activation of one increasing as the other decreases. For example, the activation of the sympathetic division reduces the secretion of saliva, producing the sensation of a dry mouth. The activation of the parasympathetic division promotes secretion of saliva.

Neurons in the ANS are activated by neurotransmitters, principally **acetylcholine** and **norepinephrine**. These neurotransmitters have complex effects; each has different effects in different organ systems because the organs contain different neurochemical receptors. In addition, the balance between these two main neurotransmitters, as well as their absolute quantity,

is important. Therefore, these two major ANS neurotransmitters can produce a wide variety of responses. Norepinephrine, as we will describe shortly, plays several important roles in the stress response.

The Neuroendocrine System

The **endocrine system** consists of ductless glands distributed throughout the body (see [Figure 5.3](#)). The **neuroendocrine system** consists of those endocrine glands that are controlled by and interact with the nervous system. Glands of the endocrine and neuroendocrine systems secrete chemicals known as **hormones**, which move into the bloodstream to be carried to different parts of the body. Specialized receptors on target tissues or organs allow hormones to have specific effects, even though the hormones circulate throughout the body. At the target, hormones may have a direct effect, or they may cause the secretion of another hormone.

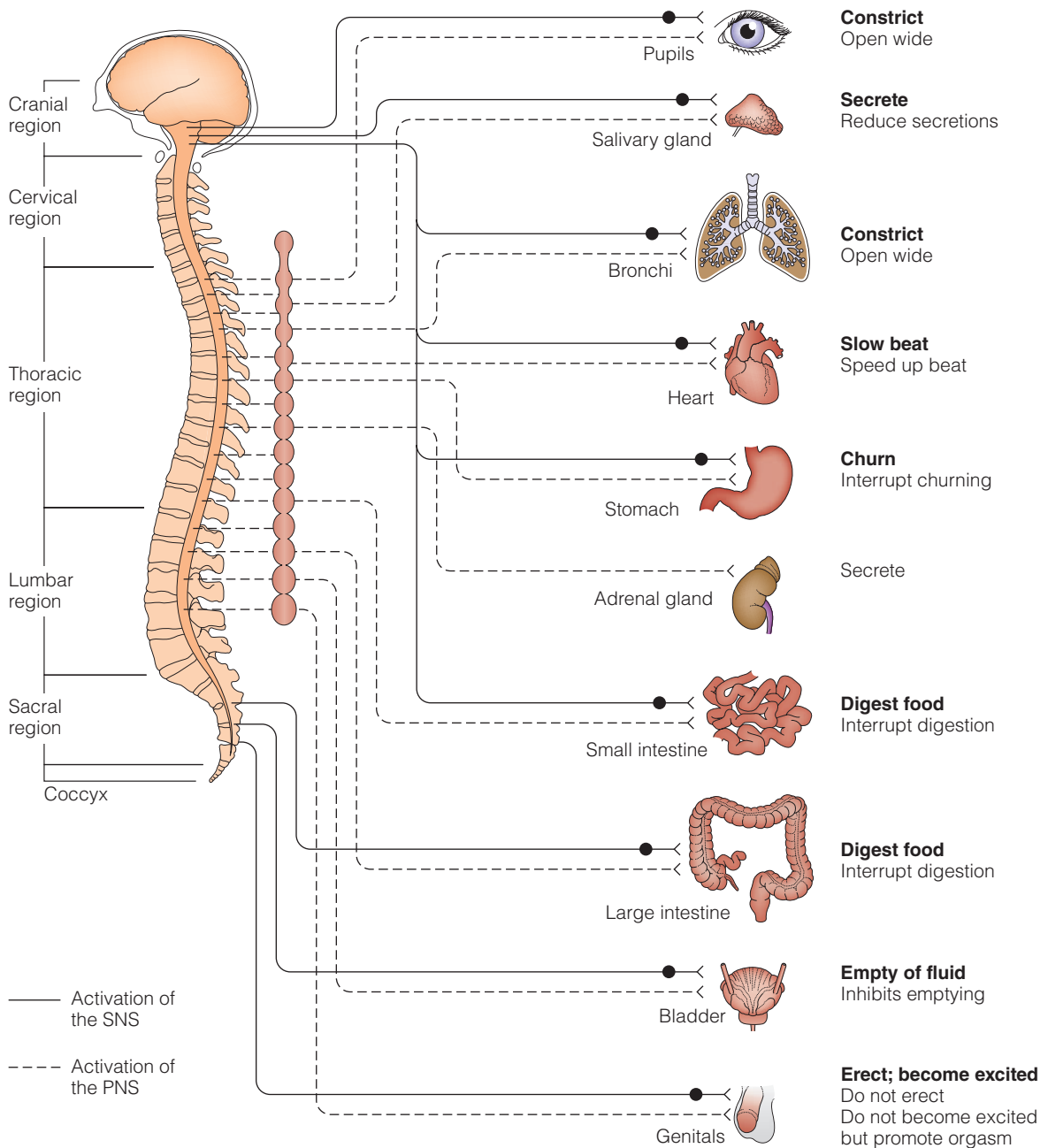


FIGURE 5.2 Autonomic nervous system and target organs. Solid lines and bold type represent the parasympathetic system, whereas dashed lines and lighter type represent the sympathetic system.

The endocrine and nervous systems work closely together because they have several similarities, but they also differ in important ways. Both systems share, synthesize, and release chemicals. In the nervous system, these chemicals are called neurotransmitters; in the endocrine system, they are called hormones. The

activation of neurons is usually rapid, and the effect is short term; the endocrine system responds more slowly, and its action persists longer. In the nervous system, neurotransmitters are released by the stimulation of neural impulses, flow across the synaptic cleft, and are immediately either reabsorbed or inactivated.

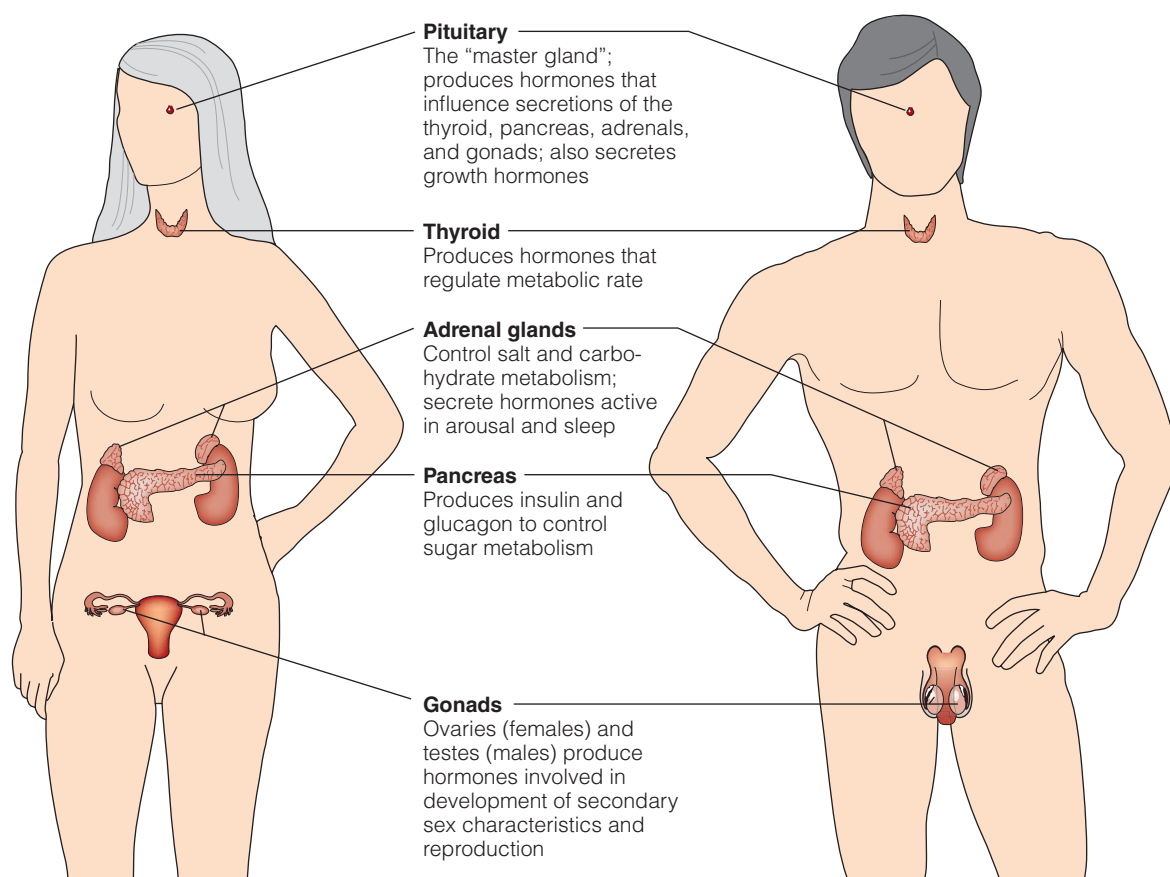


FIGURE 5.3 Some important endocrine glands.

In the endocrine system, hormones are synthesized by the endocrine cells, are released into the blood, reach their targets in minutes—or even hours—and exert prolonged effects. The endocrine and nervous systems both have communication and control functions, and both work toward integrated, adaptive behaviors. The two systems are related in function and interact in neuroendocrine responses.

The Pituitary Gland The **pituitary gland** is located in the brain and is an excellent example of the intricate relationship between the nervous and endocrine systems. The pituitary is connected to the hypothalamus, a structure in the forebrain, and is sometimes referred to as the “master gland” because it produces several hormones that affect other glands and prompt the production of yet other hormones.

Of the seven hormones produced by the anterior portion of the pituitary gland, **adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH)** plays an essential role in the stress

response. When stimulated by the hypothalamus, the pituitary releases ACTH, which in turn acts on the **adrenal glands**.

The Adrenal Glands The adrenal glands are endocrine glands located on top of each kidney. Each gland is composed of an outer covering, the **adrenal cortex**, and an inner part, the **adrenal medulla**. Both secrete hormones that are important in the response to stress. The **adrenocortical response** occurs when ACTH from the pituitary stimulates the adrenal cortex to release glucocorticoids, one type of hormone. **Cortisol**, the most important of these hormones, exerts various effects on major organs in the body (Kemeny, 2003). This hormone is so strongly associated with stress that the level of cortisol circulating in the blood can be used as an index of stress. Its peak levels appear 20 to 40 minutes after a stressor, allowing time for measurement of this stress hormone. Cortisol can also be assessed in the saliva and urine.

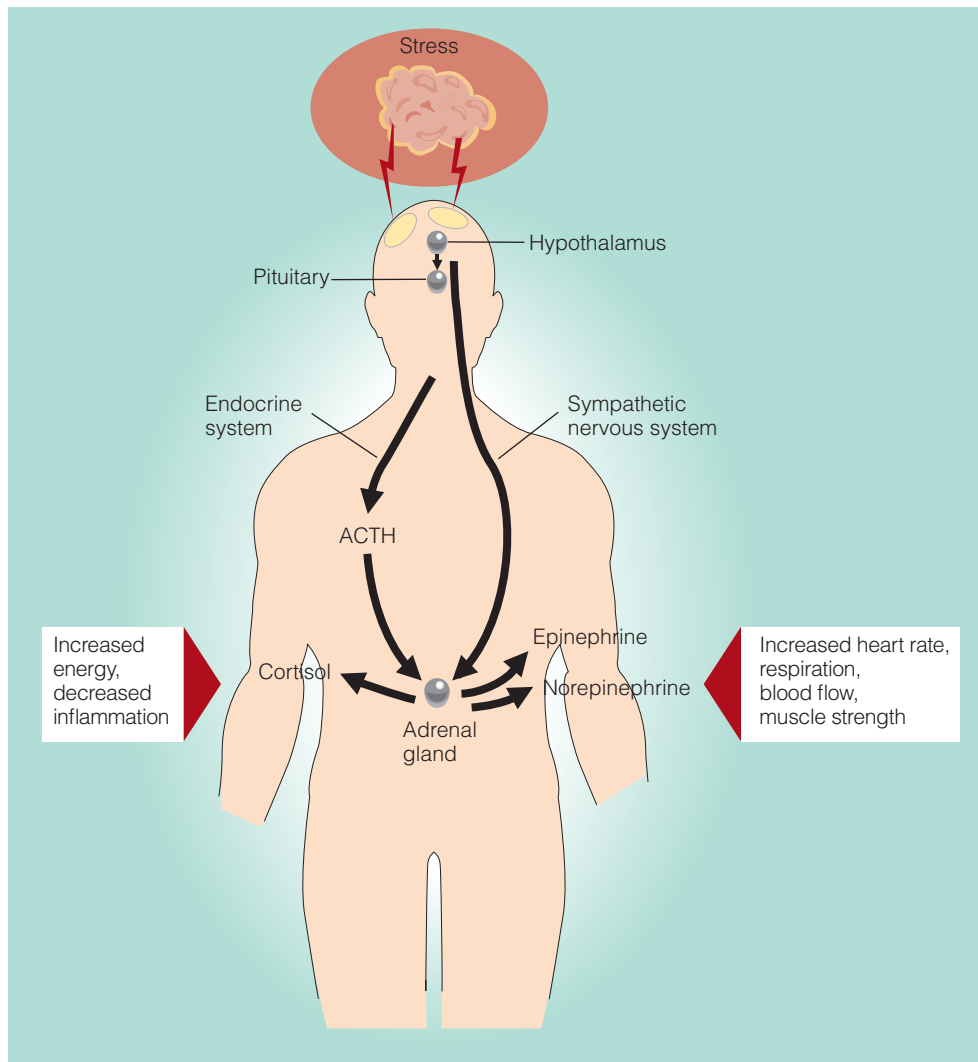


FIGURE 5.4 Physiological effects of stress.

The **adrenomedullary response** occurs when the sympathetic nervous system activates the adrenal medulla. This action prompts secretion of **catecholamines**, a class of chemicals containing norepinephrine and **epinephrine**. Norepinephrine is both a hormone and a neurotransmitter and is produced in many places in the body besides the adrenal medulla. **Figure 5.4** shows this adrenomedullary response.

On the other hand, epinephrine (sometimes referred to as adrenaline) is produced exclusively in the adrenal medulla. It is so closely and uniquely associated with the adrenomedullary stress response that it is sometimes used as an index of stress. The amount of epinephrine secreted can be determined by assaying a

person's urine, thus measuring stress by tapping into the physiology of the stress response. Like other hormones, epinephrine and norepinephrine circulate through the bloodstream, so their action is both slower and more prolonged than the action of neurotransmitters.

Physiology of the Stress Response

Each of these physiological reactions to stress begins with the perception of some kind of stress or threat, whether it be an unfair accusation or insult, a job demand, or fears of infection or job loss due to a disease pandemic. That *perception* results in activation of the sympathetic division of the ANS, which mobilizes the

body's resources to react in emotional, stressful, and emergency situations. Walter Cannon (1932) termed this configuration of responses the “fight or flight” reaction because this array of responses prepares the body for either option. Sympathetic activation prepares the body for intense motor activity, the sort necessary for attack, defense, or escape. This mobilization occurs through two routes and affects all parts of the body.

One route is through direct activation of the sympathetic division of the ANS (called the adrenomedullary system), which activates the adrenal medulla to secrete epinephrine and norepinephrine (Kemeny, 2003). The effects occur throughout the body, affecting the cardiovascular, digestive, and respiratory systems. The other route is through the **hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA)** axis, which involves all these structures. The action begins with perception of a threatening situation, which prompts action in the hypothalamus. The hypothalamic response is the release of corticotropin-releasing hormone, which stimulates the anterior pituitary (the part of the pituitary gland at the base of the brain) to secrete ACTH. This hormone stimulates the adrenal cortex to secrete glucocorticoids, including cortisol. The secretion of cortisol mobilizes the body's energy resources, raising the level of blood sugar to provide energy for the cells. Cortisol also has an anti-inflammatory effect, giving the body a natural defense against swelling from injuries that might be sustained during a fight or a flight. Figure 5.4 shows these two routes of activation.

Together, these physiological reactions to stress prepare the body for a variety of responses that allow adaptation to a threatening situation. **Allostasis** is a term that refers to the body's maintenance of an appropriate level of activation under changing circumstances (McEwen, 2005). Activation of the sympathetic nervous system is the body's attempt to meet the needs of the situation during emergencies. At its optimum in maintaining allostasis, the ANS adapts smoothly, adjusting to normal demands by parasympathetic activation and rapidly mobilizing resources for threatening or stressful situations by sympathetic activation. Not all sympathetic activation leads to health problems, however: Short-term activation of the sympathetic nervous system by physical activity, for example, confers several health benefits. Prolonged sympathetic activation, however, creates *allostatic load*, which can overcome the body's ability to adapt. **Allostatic load** represents the “wear and tear” that the body experiences because of prolonged activation of physiological stress responses.

Allostatic load may be the source of several health problems, including weak or dysregulated cortisol production in response to stress, high blood pressure, insulin resistance, fat deposits, and even decline in cognitive abilities over time (Juster, McEwen, & Lupien, 2010; McEwen & Gianaros, 2010). These health problems will be described in greater detail in Chapter 6.

Shelley Taylor and her colleagues (Taylor, 2002, 2006; Taylor et al., 2000) raised objections to the traditional conceptualization of the stress response, questioning the basic notion that people's behavioral responses to stress are necessarily fight-or-flight. These theorists contended that concentrating on men has biased research and theory on stress responses, as fight-or-flight is a more valid description of behavioral responses for men than for women. Although they acknowledge that men's and women's nervous system responses to stress are virtually identical, they argue that women exhibit neuroendocrine responses to stress that differ from men's reactions. They propose that these differences may arise because of the hormone oxytocin, which is released in response to some stressors and linked to social activities such as bonding and affiliation. The effects of oxytocin are especially influenced by estrogen, an interaction that may lay the biological foundation for gender differences in behavioral responses to stress. Taylor and her colleagues propose that women's behavioral responses to stress are better characterized as “tend and befriend” than “fight or flight”—that is, women tend to respond to stressful situations with nurturing responses and by seeking and giving social support, rather than by either fighting or fleeing. Indeed, one of the largest gender differences in coping with stress relates to social support seeking: Women seek out the company and comfort of others when stressed more than men (Taylor et al., 2000) and tend to provide better support when stressed than men (Bodenmann et al., 2015).

Taylor and her colleagues argued that this pattern of responses arose in women during human evolutionary history. Although some researchers criticized this evolutionary explanation (Geary & Flinn, 2002), recent human research is consistent with the tend-and-befriend view (Taylor, 2006). For example, the patterns of hormone secretion during competition differ for women and men (Kivlinghan, Granger, & Booth, 2005). Furthermore, among women, relationship problems correlate with greater levels of oxytocin in the blood (Taylor et al., 2006; Taylor, Saphire-Bernstein, & Seeman, 2010), confirming a gender difference in responses to stress.

IN SUMMARY

The physiology of the stress response is complex. When a person perceives stress, the sympathetic division of the ANS rouses the person from a resting state in two ways: by stimulating the sympathetic nervous system and by producing hormones. The ANS activation is rapid, as is all neural transmission, whereas the action of the neuroendocrine system is slower but longer lasting. The pituitary releases ACTH, which in turn affects the adrenal cortex. Glucocorticoid release prepares the body to resist the stress and even to cope with injury by the release of cortisol. Together the two systems form the physiological basis for allostasis, adaptive responses under conditions of change.

An understanding of the physiology of stress does not completely clarify the meaning of stress. Several models, described next, attempt to better define and explain stress.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Diagram the parts of the body involved in the physiological stress response, as well as the neurotransmitters and hormones involved.

5-2 Theories of Stress

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 5-3** Understand Selye's perspective on stress, and the stages of the general adaptation syndrome
- 5-4** Understand Lazarus's transactional view of stress, and his emphasis on the role of an individual's appraisals in the stress process

If you ask people you know whether they are stressed, it is unlikely anyone will ask you what you mean. People seem to know what stress is without having to define it. However, for researchers, *stress* has no simple definition (McEwen, 2005). Indeed, stress has been defined in three different ways: as a stimulus, as a response, and as an interaction. When some people talk about stress,

they are referring to an environmental *stimulus*, as in “I have a high-stress job.” Others consider stress a physical *response*, as in “My heart races when I feel a lot of stress.” Still others consider stress to result from the *interaction* between environmental stimuli and the person, as in “I feel stressed when I have to make financial decisions at work, but other types of decisions do not stress me.”

These three views of stress also appear in different theories of stress. The view of stress as an external event was the first approach taken by stress researchers, the most prominent of whom was Hans Selye. During his research, Selye changed to a more physical response-based view of stress. The most influential view of stress among psychologists is the interactionist approach, proposed by Richard Lazarus, which focuses on stress as a product of both the person and the environment. The next two sections discuss the views of Selye and Lazarus.

Selye's View

Beginning in the 1930s and continuing until his death in 1982, Selye (1956, 1976, 1982) made a strong case for the relationship between stress and physical illness and brought this issue to the public's attention. Selye first conceptualized stress as a stimulus and focused his attention on the environmental conditions that produce stress. In the 1950s, he shifted his focus to stress as a response that the organism makes. To distinguish the two, Selye started using the term *stressor* to refer to the stimulus and *stress* to mean the response.

Selye's contributions to stress research included a model for how the body defends itself in stressful situations. According to Selye's model, stress was a nonspecific response, that is, a wide variety of stressors could prompt the stress response, but the response would always be the same.

The General Adaptation Syndrome Selye coined the term *general adaptation syndrome* (GAS) to refer to the body's generalized attempt to defend itself against a stressor. This syndrome is divided into three stages, the first of which is the **alarm reaction**. During alarm, the body's defenses against a stressor are mobilized through activation of the sympathetic nervous system. Adrenaline (epinephrine) is released, heart rate and blood pressure increase, respiration becomes faster, blood is diverted away from the internal organs toward the skeletal muscles, sweat glands are activated, and the gastrointestinal system decreases its activity.

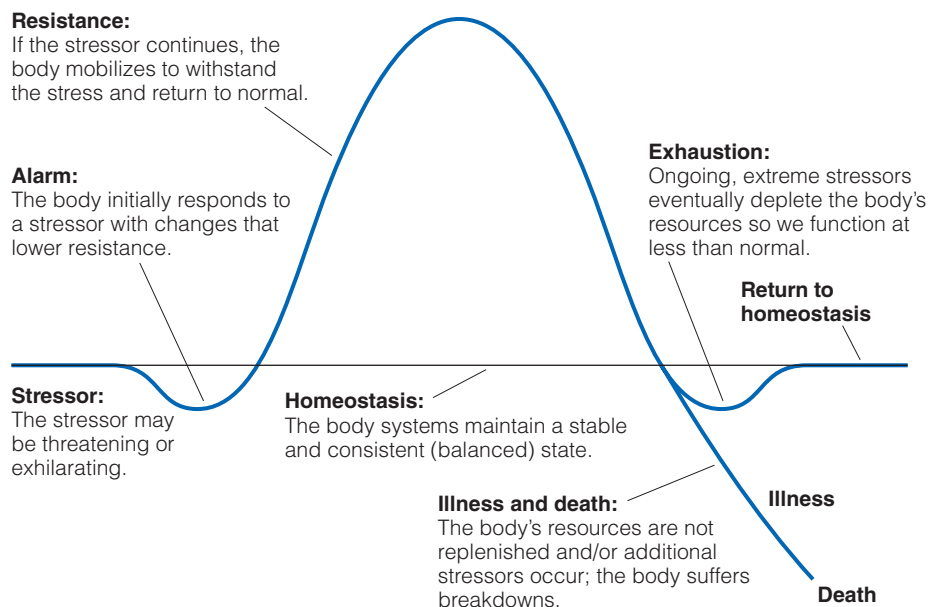


FIGURE 5.5 The three stages of Selye's general adaptation syndrome—alarm, resistance, exhaustion—and their consequences.

Source: *An invitation to health* (7th ed., p. 40) by D. Hales, 1997, Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. From HALEY, *Invitation to Health*, 7E. © 1997 Cengage Learning.

Selye called the second phase of the GAS the **resistance stage**. In this stage, the organism adapts to the stressor. How long this stage lasts depends on the severity of the stressor and the adaptive capacity of the organism. If the organism can adapt, the resistance stage will continue for a long time. During this stage, the person gives the outward appearance of normality, but physiologically the body's internal functioning is not normal. Continuing stress will cause continued neurological and hormonal changes. Selye believed that these demands take a toll, setting the stage for what he described as *diseases of adaptation*—diseases related to continued, persistent stress. **Figure 5.5** illustrates these stages and the point in the process at which diseases develop.

Among the diseases Selye considered to be the result of prolonged resistance to stress are peptic ulcers and ulcerative colitis, hypertension and cardiovascular disease, hyperthyroidism, and bronchial asthma. In addition, Selye hypothesized that resistance to stress would cause changes in the immune system, making infection more likely.

An organism's capacity to resist stress has limits, and the final stage of the GAS is the **exhaustion stage**. At the end, the organism's ability to resist is depleted, and a breakdown results. This stage is characterized by

activation of the parasympathetic division of the ANS. Under normal circumstances, parasympathetic activation keeps the body functioning in a balanced state. In the exhaustion stage, however, the parasympathetic system functions abnormally, causing a person to become exhausted. Selye believed that exhaustion frequently results in depression and sometimes even death.

Evaluation of Selye's View Selye's early concept of stress as a stimulus and his later concentration on the physical aspects of stress influenced stress research. The stimulus-based view of stress prompted researchers to investigate the various environmental conditions that cause people to experience stress and led to the construction of stress inventories, such as the Life Events Scale for Students that introduces this chapter.

However, Selye's view of the physiology of stress is probably too simplistic (McEwen, 2005). He considered the stress response to all events to be similar, a view that research does not support. He also believed that the physiological responses to stress were oriented toward maintaining functioning within a narrow range of the optimal level. The concepts of *allostasis* and *allostatic load*, which emphasize the processes of adaptation and change rather than narrow regulation, now replace Selye's view. Allostatic load occurs when many changes

are required by presence of chronic stressors. Thus, allostatic load can become overload, resulting in damage and disease. This view of stress is similar to Selye's but shows subtle differences that are more compatible with modern research.

The major criticism of Selye's view is that it ignores the situational and psychological factors that contribute to stress. These factors include the emotional component and a person's interpretation of stressful events (Mason, 1971, 1975), which makes Selye's view of stress incomplete in the view of most psychologists. Although Selye's view has had great influence on the popular conception of stress, an alternative model formulated by psychologist Richard Lazarus is more widely accepted among today's psychologists.

Lazarus's View

In Lazarus's view, the interpretation of stressful events is more important than the events themselves. Neither the environmental event nor the person's response defines stress; rather, the individual's *perception* of the psychological situation is the critical factor. For example, a job promotion may represent an opportunity and challenge for one person but a significant source of stress for another person. Stay-at-home orders during the COVID-19 pandemic might have been a source of stress and loneliness for some people but also a chance to refocus attention and priorities for others.

Psychological Factors Lazarus's emphasis on interpretation and perception differs from that of Selye. This emphasis arose from another difference: Lazarus worked largely with humans rather than nonhuman animals. The ability of people to think about and evaluate future events makes them vulnerable to psychological stressors in ways that other animals are not. People feel stressed about situations that would probably not concern an animal, such as employment, finances, public speaking, bad hair days, deadlines, and exams. Humans encounter stresses because they have high-level cognitive abilities that other animals lack.

According to Lazarus (1984, 1993), the effect that stress has on a person is based more on that person's feelings of threat, vulnerability, and ability to cope than on the stressful event itself. For example, losing a job may be extremely stressful for someone who has no money saved or who believes that finding another job will be difficult. But for someone who hated the job, has money saved, and believes finding a new job will be

easy, the experience may cause little stress. These examples highlight Lazarus's view that a life event is not what produces stress; rather, it is one's view of the situation that causes an event to become stressful.

Lazarus and Susan Folkman defined psychological stress as a "particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (1984, p. 19). This definition makes several important points. First, it emphasizes Lazarus and Folkman's interactional, or *transactional*, view of stress, holding that stress refers to a relationship between person and environment. Second, this definition emphasizes the key role of a person's appraisal of the psychological situation. Third, the definition holds that stress arises when a person appraises a situation as threatening, challenging, or harmful.

Appraisal According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), people make three kinds of appraisals of situations: primary appraisal, secondary appraisal, and reappraisal. **Primary appraisal** is not necessarily first in importance, but it is first in time. When people first encounter an event, such as an offer of a job promotion, they appraise the offer in terms of its effect on their well-being. They may view the event as irrelevant, benign-positive, or stressful. Irrelevant events are those that have no implications for a person's well-being, such as a snowstorm in another state. Benign-positive events are those that are appraised as having good implications. A stressful event means that the event is appraised as being harmful, threatening, or challenging. Lazarus (1993) defined *harm* as damage that has already been done, such as an illness or injury; *threat* as the anticipation of harm; and *challenge* as a person's confidence in overcoming difficult demands. Research indicates that the perception of threat or challenge makes a difference for performance; perception of challenge leads to better performance than perception of threat (Moore, Vine, Wilson, & Friedman, 2012).

After their initial appraisal of an event, people form an impression of their ability to control or cope with harm, threat, or challenge, an impression called **secondary appraisal**. People typically ask three questions in making secondary appraisals. The first is "What options are available to me?" The second is "What is the likelihood that I can successfully apply the necessary strategies to reduce this stress?" The third is "Will these strategies work—that is, will they alleviate my stress?" Each of these secondary appraisals can also influence

the degree of stress experienced. Naturally, having several options available that you feel you can use to reduce harm or threat will make the event less stressful.

The third type of appraisal is **reappraisal**. Appraisals change constantly as new information becomes available. Reappraisal does not always result in more stress; sometimes it decreases stress. For example, a person could reappraise the stress of a breakup with a boyfriend or girlfriend as an opportunity to spend time with other friends, which could make the experience less stressful.

Coping An important ingredient in Lazarus's theory of stress is the ability or inability to cope with a stressful situation. Lazarus and Folkman defined coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (1984, p. 141). This definition spells out several important features of coping. First, coping is a process, constantly changing as one's efforts are evaluated as more or less successful. Second, coping is not automatic; it is a learned pattern of responding to stressful situations. Third, coping requires effort. People need not be completely aware of their coping response, and the outcome may or may not be successful, but effort must have been expended. Fourth, coping is an effort to *manage* the situation; control and mastery are not necessary. For example, most of us try to manage our physical environment by striving for a comfortable air temperature. Thus, we cope with our environment even though complete mastery of the climate is impossible. How well people cope depends on the resources they have available and the strategies they use. We will discuss effective coping strategies later in this chapter.

IN SUMMARY

Two leading theories of stress are those of Selye and Lazarus. Selye, the first researcher to look closely at stress, first saw stress as a stimulus but later viewed it as a response. Whenever animals (including humans) encounter a threatening stimulus, they mobilize themselves in a generalized attempt to adapt to that stimulus. This mobilization, called the general adaptation syndrome, has three stages—alarm, resistance, and exhaustion—and the potential for trauma or illness exists at all three stages.

In contrast, Lazarus held a cognitively oriented, transactional view of stress and coping. Stressful

encounters are dynamic and complex, constantly changing and unfolding, so that the outcomes of one stressful event alter subsequent appraisals of new events. Individual differences in coping strategies and in the appraisal of stressful events are crucial to a person's experience of stress; therefore, the likelihood of developing any stress-related disorder varies with the individual.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Consider your most recent experience of stress and write down all of the aspects of the situation that made it stressful. What are some of the aspects of this experience that made it stressful for you personally? Would most other people find this experience stressful in the same way that you did? Which view of stress—Selye's or Lazarus's—best explains your response in this situation?

5-3 Sources of Stress

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 5-5** Recognize the various types of experiences that cause stress in people's lives, ranging from cataclysmic events to daily hassles

Stress can arise from numerous sources: cataclysmic events with natural or human causes, changes in an individual's life history, and ongoing hassles of daily life. In organizing sources of stress, we follow the model set forth by Lazarus and Cohen (1977), but as these two researchers emphasized, an individual's perception of a stressful event is more crucial than the event itself.

Cataclysmic Events

Lazarus and Cohen defined cataclysmic events as "sudden, unique, and powerful single life-events requiring major adaptive responses from population groups sharing the experience" (1977, p. 91). Several cataclysmic events, both intentional and unintentional, strike unpredictably in areas around the world. Unintentional major events include catastrophes such as hurricanes, typhoons, fires, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, disease pandemics, and other cataclysmic events that kill

large numbers of people and create stress, grief, and fear among survivors. Mass shootings and acts of terrorism are examples of intentional cataclysmic events.

Occasionally, stressful events are so powerful that they affect nearly the entire globe. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic caused millions of infections, hundreds of thousands of deaths, and economic instability worldwide, but major epicenters of infection such as New York City suffered some of the greatest early impacts. Other recent widespread stressful events included the great earthquake and tsunami that devastated large parts of Japan in March 2011, the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in December 2004, and Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, which destroyed New Orleans and other cities on the Gulf of Mexico in August 2005. The physical damage of these natural events was astronomical. More than 200,000 people were killed or went missing, and countless others were left injured, sick, and homeless. Survivors of the Indian Ocean tsunami (Dewaraja & Kawamura, 2006) and residents in the New Orleans area (Weems et al., 2007) experienced symptoms of depression and **posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**. However, several factors moderated or exacerbated these symptoms, such as their feelings of support from others, discrimination, and their proximity to the destruction.

Natural disasters can be devastating to huge numbers of people, but they cannot be blamed on any single person or group of persons. In contrast, the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City and the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, were all *intentional* acts. Each was sudden, unique, and powerful, and each required adaptive responses from large numbers of people. Television and the media brought the aftermath of these cataclysmic events into millions of homes, resulting in multitudes of people having similar stress-related experiences.

Several factors contribute to how much stress an event creates, including physical proximity to the event, time elapsed since the event, and the intention of the perpetrators. The September 11 attack on the World Trade Center included all three factors for those living in New York City, creating lingering trauma for people close to the site (Hasin, Keyes, Hat-zenbuehler, Aharonovich, & Alderson, 2007). For those not in New York City, stress associated with the attacks began to dissipate within weeks (Schlenger et al., 2002), but other evidence suggests that some people continued to experience negative psychological and physical health effects several years later (Holman et al., 2008; Richman, Cloninger, & Rospenda, 2008; Updegraff, Silver, & Holman,



Paula Bronstein/Getty Images/Getty Images

Cataclysmic events require major adaptive responses from large groups of people.

2008). The intentional nature of the attacks added to the stress, making these violent events more traumatic than natural disasters.

In summary, cataclysmic events can be either intentional or unintentional, with different effects on stress. Such events strike suddenly, without warning, and people who survive them as well as those who help with the aftermath often see their experience as life altering. Despite the power of cataclysmic events to affect people, researchers have focused more attention on life events as sources of stress (Richman et al., 2008).

Life Events

Major life events—such as experiencing the death of a spouse or parent, getting a divorce, being fired from your job, or moving to a different country—are major sources of stress, but minor life events can also be stressful. Some of the items on the Life Events Scale for Students at the beginning of this chapter are life events, and the popular Holmes and Rahe (1967) Social Readjustment Rating Scale described later in this chapter also consists of life events. One reason why the COVID-19 pandemic led to such widespread stress is because, for many people, the pandemic produced several stressful life events: loss of a job, changes in work conditions, change in sleeping patterns, changes in social relations, personal illness, or illness of a family member.

Although a cataclysmic event such as the COVID-19 pandemic can produce stressful life events, life events differ from cataclysmic events in three important ways. Life events and life event scales emphasize the importance of *change*. When events require people to make some sort of change or readjustment, they feel stressed. Positive events such as getting married, becoming a parent, and starting a new job all require some adjustment, but negative events such as losing a job, the death of a family member, or being a victim of a violent crime also require adaptation. Unlike cataclysmic events that affect huge numbers of people, stressful life events affect a few people or perhaps only one. Divorce that happens to you can be more profound in changing your life than an earthquake in a far-off location that affects thousands.

Life events usually evolve more slowly than cataclysmic events. Divorce does not happen in a single day and being dismissed from a job is ordinarily preceded by a period of conflict. Crime victimization, however, is often sudden and unexpected. All of these life events produce stress, and subsequent problems are common.

For example, divorce may decrease stress between the divorcing partners (Amato & Hohmann-Marriott, 2007) but more often creates short-term and sometimes long-term problems for both the adults and their children (Michael, Torres, & Seemann, 2007). When losing a job results in long-term unemployment, this situation creates a cascade of stressors, including financial problems and family conflict (Howe, Levy, & Caplan, 2004; Song, Foo, Uy, & Sun, 2011). Being the victim of a violent crime “transforms people into victims and changes their lives forever” (Koss, 1990, p. 374). Crime victims tend to lose their sense of invulnerability, and their risk of PTSD increases (Koss, Bailey, Yuan, Herrera, & Lichter, 2003). This risk applies to a variety of types of victimization, and studies have established the risk of PTSD for both children (Sebre et al., 2004) and adults. Even exposure to community violence increases risks for children (Rosario, Salzinger, Feldman, & Ng-Mak, 2008).

Daily Hassles

Unlike life events that call for people to adjust their lives, daily hassles are part of everyday life. Living in poverty, fearing crime, arguing with one’s spouse, balancing work with family life, living in crowded and polluted conditions, and fighting a long daily commute to work are examples of daily hassles. The stress brought on by daily hassles can originate from both the physical and the psychosocial environment.

Daily Hassles and the Physical Environment Noise, pollution, crowding, fear of crime, and personal alienation are often a part of urban life. Although these environmental sources of stress may be more concentrated in urban settings, rural life can also be noisy, polluted, hot, cold, humid, or even crowded, with many people living together in a one- or two-room dwelling. Nonetheless, the crowding, noise, pollution, fear of crime, and personal alienation more typical of urban living combine to produce what Eric Graig (1993) termed **urban press**. The results from one study (Christenfeld, Glynn, Phillips, & Shrira, 1999) suggested that the combined sources of stress affecting residents of New York City are factors in that city’s higher heart attack death rate. Living in a polluted, noisy, and crowded environment creates chronic daily hassles that not only make life unpleasant but may also affect behavior and performance (Evans & Stecker, 2004) and pose a risk to health (Schell & Denham, 2003). Access to a garden or park

can diminish this stress; individuals whose living situations include access to such “green spaces” report lower stress (Nielsen & Hansen, 2007) and better self-reported health (van Dillen, de Vries, Groenewegen, & Spreeuwenberg, 2011).

Noise is a type of pollution because it can be a noxious, unwanted stimulus that intrudes into a person’s environment, but it is quite difficult to define in any objective way. One person’s music is another person’s noise. The importance of subjective attitude toward noise is illustrated by a study (Nivison & Endresen, 1993) that asked residents living beside a busy street about their health, sleep, anxiety level, and attitude toward noise. The level of noise was not a factor, but the residents’ subjective view of noise showed a strong relationship to the number of their health complaints. Similarly, workers who are more sensitive to noise (Waye et al., 2002) show a higher cortisol level and rate

low-frequency noises as more annoying than workers who are less sensitive.

Another source of hassles is *crowding*. A series of classic experiments with rats living in crowded conditions (Calhoun, 1956, 1962) showed that crowding produced changes in social and sexual behavior that included increases in territoriality, aggression, and infant mortality and decreases in levels of social integration. More recent work confirms that in primates, too, crowding is associated with increases in physiological stress responses (Dettmer, Novak, Meyer, & Suomi, 2014; Pearson, Reeder, & Judge, 2015). These results suggest that crowding is a source of stress that affects behavior, but studies with humans are complicated by several factors, including a definition of crowding.

A distinction between the concepts of population density and crowding helps in understanding the effects of crowding on humans. In 1972, Daniel Stokols defined **population density** as a *physical* condition in which a large population occupies a limited space. **Crowding**, however, is a *psychological* condition that arises from a person’s perception of the high-density environment in which that person is confined. Thus, density is necessary for crowding but does not automatically produce the feeling of being crowded. Being in a packed subway train may not make you feel crowded if you have an empty seat next to you, but being stuck sitting between two strangers would increase your feelings of crowding and your physiological stress response. Indeed, this is what researchers found in a study of train commuters (Evans & Wener, 2007). The distinction between density and crowding means that personal perceptions, such as a feeling of control, are critical in the definition of crowding. Crowding in both neighborhoods and residences plays a role in how stressed a person will be (Regoeczi, 2003).

Pollution, noise, and crowding often co-occur in “the environment of poverty” (Ulrich, 2002, p. 16). The environment of poverty may also include violence or the threat of violence and discrimination. On a daily basis, wealthier people experience fewer stressors than poorer people (Grzywacz et al., 2004), but even wealthy people are not exempt. The threat of violence and fear of crime are a part of the stress of modern life. Some evidence suggests that community violence is especially stressful for children and adolescents (Ozer, 2005; Rosario et al., 2008). Children who grow up in an environment of poverty experience greater chronic stress and allostatic load, which may contribute to health problems later in life (Matthews, Gallo, & Taylor, 2010). For



Crowding, noise, and pollution increase the stress of urban life.

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example, children growing up in lower socioeconomic status households perceive greater threat and family chaos, which are linked to greater cortisol production as they age (Chen, Cohen, & Miller, 2010).

Unfortunately, in the United States, poverty is more common among ethnic minorities than among European Americans (U.S. Census Bureau [USCB], 2015), and discrimination is another type of daily hassle that is often associated with the environment of poverty. However, discrimination is part of the psychosocial environment.

Daily Hassles and the Psychosocial Environment

People's psychosocial environment can be fertile ground for creating daily hassles. These stressors originate in the everyday social environment from sources such as community, workplace, and family interactions.

Discrimination is a stressor that occurs with alarming regularity in a variety of social situations in the community and workplace for African Americans in the United States (Landrine & Klonoff, 1996), but other ethnic groups (Edwards & Romero, 2008), women, and gay and bisexual individuals (Huebner & Davis, 2007) also face discrimination. Unfair treatment creates both disadvantage for the individuals discriminated against and a stigma that is stressful (Major & O'Brien, 2005). Discrimination is a source of stress that may increase the risk for cardiovascular disease (Troxel, Matthews, Bromberger, & Sutton-Tyrrell, 2003). A meta-analysis of

over 100 studies confirmed this link between perceived discrimination and both mental and physical health problems (Pascoe & Richman, 2009). Discrimination is associated with both increased physiological stress responses, as well as maladaptive health behaviors that people use to cope with discrimination.

Discrimination is not the only stressor that occurs in the workplace—some jobs are more stressful than others. Contrary to some people's assumption, business executives who must make many decisions every day have *less* job-related stress than their employees who merely carry out those decisions. Most executives have jobs in which the demands are high but so is their level of control, and lack of control is more stressful than the burden of making decisions. Lower-level occupations are actually more stressful than executive jobs (Wamala, Mittleman, Horsten, Schenck-Gustafsson, & Orth-Gomér, 2000). Using stress-related illness as a criterion, the jobs of construction worker, secretary, laboratory technician, waiter or waitress, machine operator, farmworker, and painter are among the most stressful. These jobs all share a high level of demand combined with a low level of control, status, and compensation. Stress can even be influenced by whether people find their work engaging or not. People who are engaged and committed to their work environment have lower cortisol production during the workweek compared with those with little engagement in their work (Harter & Stone, 2012). Brief vacations from work may help



High job demands can produce stress, especially when combined with low levels of control.

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Would You BELIEVE...?

Vacations Relieve Work Stress . . . But Not for Long

Summer vacation. Spring break. Winter holiday. Every year, Americans spend millions of dollars on vacations from work and school. Vacations take people away from work and provide opportunities for fun, travel, and relaxation. But do vacations serve as an effective long-term “intervention” for alleviating work-related stress?

Several studies have attempted to answer this question, and a review of this research yields some surprising results (de Bloom et al., 2009). People experience less stress during

a vacation than they did prior to a vacation, which we expect. Furthermore, in the days following a vacation, people report substantially less stress than they did prior to the vacation. In some cases, vacations may even offer relief from physical health symptoms.

However, this “vacation effect” tends to disappear quickly. Typically, any stress reduction effects of a vacation disappear within three to four weeks (de Bloom et al., 2009; Kuhnel & Sonnentag, 2011). One study showed the effect to fade within a

single week (de Bloom et al., 2010). This decrease may occur because a person’s return to work leaves him or her needing to work extra hours or overtime to “catch up,” which increases stress.

Certainly, these findings do not suggest that people should avoid vacations altogether. Instead, they suggest that vacations should not be the only way to cope with work- or school-related stress. People can more effectively manage stress by using proven techniques, such as those described at the end of this chapter.

relieve work-related stress, but this relief does not last as long as people may hope (see Would You Believe . . . ? box).

Stress is not confined to solely to work, as many people also struggle to balance the roles of both worker and family member. Half of all workers are married to someone who is also employed, creating multiple roles for both women and men (Moen & Yu, 2000). Problems may arise from work stress spilling over into the family

or from family conflicts intruding into the workplace (Ilies et al., 2007; Schieman, Milkie, & Glavin, 2009). The differences in men’s and women’s roles and expectations within the family mean that family and work conflicts influence women and men in different ways. Women often encounter stress because of the increased burden of doing the work associated with their multiple roles as employee, wife, and mother, but overall, these multiple roles offer health benefits (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Schnittker, 2007).

The positive or negative effects of work and family roles depend on the resources people have available. Partner and family support affects both men and women, but its absence more strongly affects women’s health (Walen & Lachman, 2000). Women with children and no partner are especially burdened and, therefore, stressed (Livermore & Powers, 2006). Thus, filling multiple obligations is not necessarily stressful for women, but low control and poor support for multiple roles can produce stress for both men and women. Despite the possibilities for conflict and stress, families are a major source of social support, a resource that is important for coping with stress.



Multiple roles can be a source of stress.

IN SUMMARY

Stress has several sources that can be classified according to the magnitude of the event: cataclysmic events, life events, and daily hassles. Cataclysmic events include natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes and intentional violence such as terrorist attacks.

Life events are events that produce changes in people's lives that require adaptation. Life events may be either negative or positive. Negative life events such as divorce, death of a family member, or crime victimization can produce severe and long-lasting stress.

Daily hassles are everyday events that create repetitive, chronic distress. Some hassles arise from the physical environment; others come from the psychosocial environment. Stress from pollution, noise, crowding, and violence combine in urban settings with commuting hassles to create a situation described as *urban press*. Each of these sources of stress may also be considered individually. Noise and crowding are annoyances, but there is some evidence that even low levels of these stressors can prompt stress responses, which suggests that long-term exposure may have negative health consequences. The combination of community stressors such as crowding, noise, and threat of violence is common in poor neighborhoods, creating an environment of poverty.

Daily hassles in the psychosocial environment occur within the situations of the everyday social environment, including community, workplace, and family. Within the community, racism and sexism produce stress for the targets of these types of discrimination. Within the workplace, jobs with high demands and little control create stress, and poor support adds to the stress. Within the family, relationships such as spouse and parent present possibilities for conflict and stress as well as support. In addition, the conflict between family and work demands is a source of stress for many people.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Stress can be a part of both major life events as well as ongoing daily hassles. How do these types of experiences differ? How does Lazarus's transactional view of stress (described earlier in this chapter) help explain why both life events and daily hassles have the potential to create stress?

5-4 Measurement of Stress

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 5-6 Understand the three major methods of measuring stress, as well as the strengths and limitations of each approach

Given the nearly endless sources of stress that exist in modern life, how do researchers measure stress? The measurement of stress is an important part of a health psychologist's job, as researchers need to first measure stress to understand the effect of stress on health. This section discusses some of the more widely used methods and addresses the problems involved in determining their reliability and validity.

Methods of Measurement

Researchers have used a variety of approaches to measure stress, but most fall into two broad categories: physiological measures and self-reports (Monroe, 2008). Physiological measures directly assess aspects of the body's physical stress response. Self-reports measure either **life events** or **daily hassles** that people experience. Both approaches hold some potential for investigating the effects of stress on illness and health.

Physiological Measures Physiological measures of stress include blood pressure, heart rate, galvanic skin response, respiration rate, and increased secretion of stress hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine. These physiological measures provide researchers with a window into the activation of the body's sympathetic nervous system and HPA axis.

Another common approach to the physiological measurement of stress is through its association with the release of hormones. Epinephrine and norepinephrine, for example, can be measured in either blood or urine samples and can provide an index of stress (Eller, Netterström, & Hansen, 2006; Krantz, Forsman, & Lundberg, 2004). The levels of these hormones circulating in the blood decrease within a few minutes after the stressful experience, so measurement must be quick to capture the changes. The levels of hormones persist longer in the urine but factors other than stress contribute to urinary levels of these hormones. The stress hormone cortisol persists for at least 20 minutes, and measurement of salivary cortisol provides an index of the changes in this hormone. A newer method assesses

the cortisol in human hair, which represents the body's cortisol production over the preceding six months (Kirschbaum, Tietze, Skoluda, & Dettenborn, 2009).

The advantage of these physiological measures of stress is that they are direct, highly reliable, and easily quantified. A disadvantage is that the mechanical and electrical hardware and clinical settings that are frequently used may themselves produce stress. Thus, this approach to measuring stress is useful but not the most widely used method. Self-report measures are far more common.

Life Events Scales Since the late 1950s and early 1960s, researchers have developed several self-report instruments to measure levels of stress. The earliest and best known of these self-report procedures is the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS), developed by Thomas H. Holmes and Richard Rahe in 1967. The scale is simply a list of 43 life events arranged in rank order from most to least stressful. Each event carries an assigned value, ranging from 100 points for death of a spouse to 11 points for minor violations of the law. Respondents check the items they experienced during a recent period, usually the previous 6 to 24 months. Adding each item's point value and totaling scores yields a stress score for each person. These scores can then be correlated with future events, such as incidence of illness, to determine the relationship between this measure of stress and the occurrence of physical illness.

Other stress inventories exist, including the Life Events Scale for Students (Clements & Turpin, 1996), the assessment that appears as Check Your Health Risks at the beginning of this chapter. College students who check more stress situations tend to use health services more than students who check fewer events.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck, & Mermelstein, 1983) emphasizes *perception* of events rather than the events themselves. The PSS is a 14-item scale that attempts to measure the degree to which people appraise events in the past month as being “unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloading” (Cohen et al., 1983, p. 387). The scale assesses three components of stress: (1) daily hassles, (2) major events, and (3) changes in coping resources. Researchers use the PSS in a variety of situations, such as measuring prenatal stress in expectant mothers (Nast et al., 2013), determining the effectiveness of a relaxation program for elementary teachers (Nassiri, 2005), and predicting burnout among college athletic coaches (Tashman, Tenenbaum, & Eklund, 2010). Its brevity combined with good



Life events scales also include positive events because such events also require adjustment.

reliability and validity has led to use of this scale in a variety of research projects.

Everyday Hassles Scales Lazarus and his associates pioneered an approach to stress measurement that looks at daily hassles rather than life events. Daily hassles are “experiences and conditions of daily living that have been appraised as salient and harmful or threatening to the endorser's well-being” (Lazarus, 1984, p. 376). Recall from the discussion of theories of stress that Lazarus views stress as a transactional, dynamic complex shaped by people's *appraisal* of the environmental situation and their *perceived capabilities to cope* with this situation. Consistent with this view, Lazarus and his associates insisted that self-report scales must be able to assess subjective elements such as personal appraisal, beliefs, goals, and commitments (Lazarus, 2000; Lazarus, DeLongis, Folkman, & Gruen, 1985).

The original Hassles Scale (Kanner, Coyne, Schaefer, & Lazarus, 1981) consists of 117 items about annoying, irritating, or frustrating situations in which people may *feel* hassled. These include concerns about weight, home maintenance, crime, and having too many things to do. People also rate the degree to which each item produced stress. The Hassles Scale only modestly correlates with life events, which suggests that these two types of stress are not the same thing. Furthermore, the Hassles Scale can be a more accurate predictor of psychological health than life event scales (Lazarus, 1984). A shorter Hassles Scale, developed by the same research team (DeLongis, Folkman, & Lazarus, 1988), is a better predictor than the Social Readjustment Rating Scale of both the frequency and intensity of headaches (Fernandez & Sheffield, 1996) and episodes of inflammatory

bowel disease (Searle & Bennett, 2001). Thus, everyday hassles can have more of an influence on health than the more serious life events measured by the Social Readjustment Rating Scale.

The measurement of everyday hassles also extends to specific situations. For example, the Urban Hassles Index (Miller & Townsend, 2005) measures stressors that commonly affect adolescents in urban environments, and the Family Daily Hassles Inventory (Rollins & Garrison, 2002) targets daily stressors commonly experienced by parents. Thus, researchers have a variety of self-report stress measures to choose from, depending on their purposes and specific populations of study.

IN SUMMARY

Researchers and clinicians measure stress by several methods, including physiological and biochemical measures and self-reports of stressful events. The most popular life events scale is the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, which emphasizes change in life events. Despite its popularity, the SRRS is a modest predictor of subsequent illness. Lazarus and his associates pioneered the measurement of stress as daily hassles and uplifts. These inventories emphasize the perceived severity and importance of daily events. In general, the revised Hassles and Uplifts Scale is more accurate than the SRRS in predicting future illness.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Compare and contrast physiological measures, life events scales, and everyday hassles scales in terms of their ease of use, reliability, and validity.

5-5 Coping with Stress

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 5-7 Understand why the personal resources of social support, personal control, and optimism are beneficial when dealing with stress
- 5-8 Distinguish problem-focused, emotion-focused and social coping strategies

People constantly attempt to manage the problems and stresses of their lives, and most of these attempts fit into the category of coping. However, the term **coping** is usually applied to strategies that individuals use to manage the distressing problems and emotions in their lives. Coping is an active topic of research: thousands of studies have explored the personal and situational characteristics that affect coping efforts, as well as the effectiveness of various coping strategies.

Personal Resources That Influence Coping

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested several personal resources that could help people manage the demands of a stressful situation, including good health, optimistic beliefs, socioeconomic resources, social skills, and social support. Although research supports the importance of each of these resources, the most important personal resources for coping with stress are social support, a sense of personal control, and optimistic beliefs.

Social Support **Social support** refers to a variety of material and emotional supports a person receives from others. The related concepts of **social contacts** and **social network** are sometimes used interchangeably; both refer to the number and types of people with whom one associates. The opposite of social contacts is **social isolation**, which refers to an absence of specific, meaningful interpersonal relations. People with a high level of social support ordinarily have a broad social network and many social contacts; socially isolated people have neither.

The Alameda County Study (Berkman & Syme, 1979) was the first to establish a strong link between social support and longevity. This study indicated that lack of social support was as strongly linked to mortality as cigarette smoking and a sedentary lifestyle. Subsequent research confirms the importance of social support. A recent meta-analysis of nearly 150 studies shows that people with strong social ties have substantially lower mortality rates than those with weak social ties (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). Furthermore, as **Figure 5.6** shows, the association between social support and longevity is nearly as strong as the benefits of refraining from smoking, and stronger than the benefits of consuming little or no alcohol, maintaining a healthy weight, exercising, and taking medication for hypertension. Thus, the benefits of social support

are strong and robust. (But, how often has your physician recommended that you improve your social relationships to stay healthy?)

Social support may influence stress in several ways. For example, stressed individuals may benefit from a support network with members who encourage them to adopt healthier habits, such as stopping smoking, beginning an exercise program, or keeping doctor's appointments. Social support may also help people gain confidence in their ability to handle stressful situations; thus, when they experience stress, they may appraise the stressor as less threatening than do people who have fewer coping resources (Wills, 1998). Another possibility is that social support may alter the physiological responses to stress (DeVries, Glasper, & Detillion, 2003; Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). This view, referred to as the *stress-buffering hypothesis*, suggests that social support lessens or eliminates the harmful effects of stress and therefore protects against disease and death. A large epidemiological survey of over 30,000 Americans supports this view (Moak & Agrawal, 2010). For adults who experienced little life stress, social support was not strongly related to their feelings of distress or overall physical health. For those who experienced more life stress, higher levels of social support related

to less depression and anxiety and greater self-reported physical health.

The positive effects of social support for health are well established (Martin & Brantley, 2004), but some individuals benefit more than others. For example, marriage (or at least happy marriage) would seem to provide excellent social support for both partners, but the benefits of marriage are not equal for women and men—men's health benefits more from marriage than women's health (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). The reason for men's advantage is not clear, but one possibility is that women's role as caregivers puts them in the position of providing more care than they receive. Providing companionship is a positive factor for the caregiver as well as the recipient, but providing help comes at a cost to the helper (Strazdins & Broom, 2007). This situation may describe women's more than men's caregiving role, and thus the gender difference.

Social support is a significant factor in predicting both the development of disease and the course of chronic disease (Martin & Brantley, 2004). Surprisingly, the stress-buffering benefits of social support are not limited to support provided by humans (see Would You Believe . . .? box). Furthermore, the benefits of social

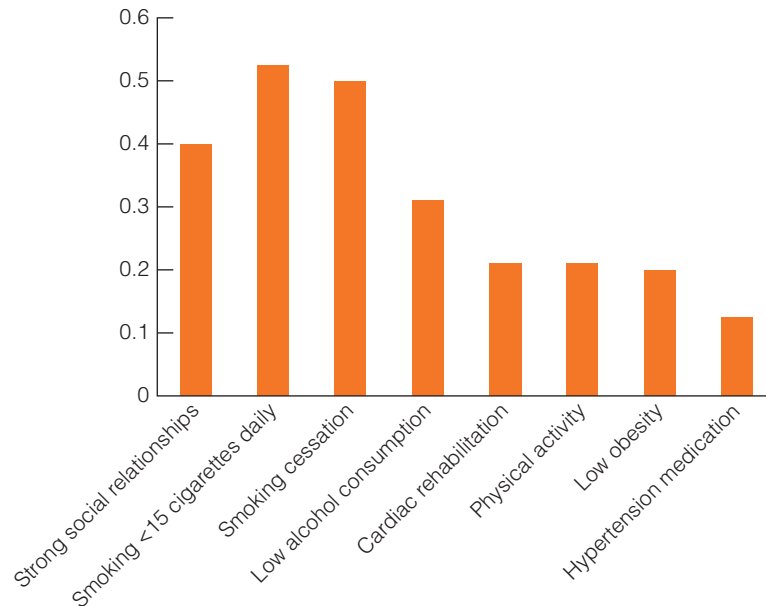


FIGURE 5.6 Odds of decreased mortality across several factors associated with mortality, including social support.

Source: From "Social relationships and mortality risk: A meta-analytic review," by J. Holt-Lunstad, T. B. Smith, & J. B. Layton, 2010, *PLoS Med*, 7(7), e1000316.

support are entwined with another factor that influences coping: perceptions of personal control.

Personal Control A second factor that affects people's ability to cope with stressful life events is a feeling of **personal control**—that is, confidence that they have some control over the events that shape their lives. Both classic and current research confirm the benefits of a sense of control. One classic approach is Julian Rotter's (1966) concept of locus of control, a continuum that captures the extent to which people believe they are in control of the important events in their lives. According to Rotter, people who believe that they control their own lives have an *internal locus of control*, whereas those who believe that luck, fate, or the acts of others determine their lives score high on *external locus of control*. The value of an internal locus of control appeared in a study of people with chronic illness (Livneh, Lott, & Antonak, 2004); those who had adapted well showed a higher sense of control than those who had adapted poorly.

Ellen Langer and Judith Rodin (1976), who studied older nursing home residents, reported another classic example of the effects of personal control. This research project encouraged some residents to assume more responsibility for and control over their daily lives, whereas others had decisions made for them. The areas of control were fairly minor, such as rearranging furniture, choosing when and with whom to visit in the home, and deciding what leisure activities to pursue. In addition, residents were offered a small growing plant, which they were free to accept or reject and to care for as they wished. A comparison group of residents received information that emphasized the responsibility of the nursing staff, and each of them also received a live plant. Although equal in most other ways, the amount of control made a substantial difference in health. Residents in the responsibility-induced group were happier, more active, and more alert, with a higher level of general well-being. In just three weeks, most of the comparison group (71%) had become more debilitated, whereas nearly all the responsibility-induced group (93%) showed some overall mental and physical improvement. In an 18-month follow-up (Rodin & Langer, 1977), residents in the original responsibility-induced group retained their advantage, and their mortality rate was lower than that of the comparison group.

How do perceptions of control influence health? While there may be many ways in which control buffers stress, one route may be through reductions

in potentially harmful physiological responses. A meta-analysis of over 200 studies examined the characteristics of laboratory stress tasks that led to the greatest production of the stress hormone cortisol (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004). Stress tasks that offered participants little control—such as completing impossible tasks, performing under extreme time pressures, or exposure to uncontrollable loud noises—led to the largest increases in cortisol production and the longest times to recovery. These results suggest that people who frequently face situations that offer little control may be most likely to suffer the long-term health consequences of prolonged HPA activation.

These studies suggest that lack of control may impair health, and even a minimal amount of control can be beneficial to health. However, the benefits of control may be bound to Western cultures that emphasize individual autonomy and effort. In a comparison of stress and coping among people from Japan and Great Britain (O'Connor & Shimizu, 2002), the Japanese participants reported a lower sense of personal control, but only the British reported that loss of control produced stress. Thus, the benefits of personal control may be restricted to people in Western societies. However, the universal occurrence of stress means that strategies for coping with stress occur in all societies.

Optimism In times of uncertainty, do you usually expect the best? Do you expect more good things to happen to you than bad? If you answered yes to these two questions, you are probably high in the trait of optimism.

Psychologists define optimism simply: **Optimists** are people who expect good things to happen to them, whereas pessimists are people who generally expect bad things. Of course, lay conceptualizations of these traits view optimists as cheery and upbeat and pessimists as “doom and gloom.” But to psychologists, the defining feature of optimism is not positive mood, but rather a person's general *belief* that good things will happen. This belief substantially influences both mental and physical health, as well as how people cope with stress.

Optimists experience less emotional distress than pessimists, as shown in studies of students beginning college (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1992), cancer patients (Carver et al., 1993), coronary bypass surgery patients (Fitzgerald et al., 1993), and Alzheimer's caregivers (Shifren & Hooker, 1995). Even more striking are findings that show that optimistic beliefs predict physical health and mortality. For example, a study of nearly

Would You BELIEVE...?

Pets May Be Better Support Providers Than People

Sometimes, the best social support may not come from a friend, but instead from “man’s best friend.” But can pets—such as dogs and cats—really help people cope with stress and improve health?

Nearly 60% of households in the United States own a dog or a cat (AVMA, 2018). Pets provide companionship and affection, and, in some cases, force their owners to be more physically active. It may be no surprise that among survivors of heart attacks, dog owners are over *8 times* more likely to be alive 1 year after their heart attack than those who do not own a dog (Friedmann & Thomas, 1995), and dog owners have a 24% reduction of all-cause mortality over a 10-year period compared to those who do not own a dog (Kramer et al., 2019).

Can pets also dampen people’s physiological responses to stress? In one study, researchers asked adults to

perform a series of difficult and painful laboratory stress tasks—including mental arithmetic—while measuring their cardiovascular stress responses (Allen, Blascovich, & Mendes, 2002). Some participants did the tasks alone; some did the tasks in front of a close friend or spouse; others did the tasks in front of a pet dog or cat.

The results are striking. The presence of a pet led to the lowest stress response of all. Surprisingly, the presence of a spouse or friend led to the greatest stress response! Pets, it seems, provide comfort and support, without the possibility of criticism or evaluation. Friends and spouses provide support, too, but they are also more likely to notice someone’s poor math skills. In this situation, the support of a trusted pet provides all the benefits of social support without any apparent costs.

Pet support may be especially helpful for people who are sensitive

to criticism. For example, a recent study of children with insecure attachment styles shows that those who performed a stressful lab task in the presence of a dog produced significantly lower salivary cortisol than children who completed the task in front of a friendly human (Beetz et al., 2011). The presence of dogs has also been linked to lowered blood pressure and heart rate among older residents of nursing homes (Handlin et al., 2018) and lower depression among people living with HIV (Muldoon et al., 2017).

Thus, pets are an excellent source of unconditional social support. Humorist Dave Barry might have said it best: “You can say any foolish thing to a dog, and the dog will give you a look that says, ‘My God, you’re right! I never would’ve thought of that!’”

100,000 women found that optimistic women were 30% less likely to die from cardiovascular problems at an 8-year follow-up, compared to their pessimistic peers (Tindle et al., 2009). The physical health benefits of optimism are not limited to cardiovascular health, as a meta-analysis of over 80 studies of a variety of health conditions showed that optimists have better physical health than pessimists (Rasmussen, Scheier, & Greenhouse, 2009).

There are several reasons why optimism may confer health benefits. First, optimists are likely to have stronger social support networks than pessimists (MacLeod & Conway, 2005). Due to their positive expectations, optimists may be more likely than pessimists to invest time and energy into building social relationships (Brissette et al., 2002). Also, optimistic people are usually more likable than pessimistic people, so they may find it easier to develop a social network.

Second, the positive moods associated with optimism may speed the recovery of cardiovascular responses to stress (Fredrickson & Levenson, 1998).

Optimists and others who experience frequent positive moods may, then, experience less cumulative wear and tear on their bodies and, possibly, improved immune functioning (Marsland, Pressman, & Cohen, 2007).

Lastly, when people feel confident that good things are likely to happen, they are more likely to persist in pursuing important goals in the face of stress and setbacks. Pessimists, when confronted with problems, tend to retreat from their woes. In other words, optimists deal with stress differently than pessimists. In fact, one of the key differences between optimists and pessimists is in the coping strategies they use.

Personal Coping Strategies

Psychologists have categorized coping strategies in many ways, but Folkman and Lazarus’s (1980) conceptualization of coping strategies as emotion focused or problem focused is the most influential. **Problem-focused coping** is aimed at changing the source of the

stress, whereas **emotion-focused coping** is oriented toward managing the emotions that accompany the perception of stress. Both approaches can be effective in making the stressed individual feel better, but the two approaches may not be equally effective in managing the stressful situation.

As shown in **Table 5.1**, several different strategies fall within the emotion-focused and problem-focused categories. For example, taking action to try to get rid of the problem is a problem-focused strategy, but seeking the company of friends or family for comfort and reassurance is an emotion-focused strategy. If an upcoming exam is a source of stress, making (and following) a schedule for studying is a problem-focused strategy. Calling up a friend and complaining about the test or going out to a movie might help manage the distress, but these strategies are almost certainly not effective in preparing for the test. The problem-focused strategy sounds like a better choice in this case, but emotion-focused coping can be effective in some situations (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). When stress is unavoidable, finding a way to feel better may be the best option. For example, if you were dumped by someone who has no intention of getting back together with you, then it may be better to manage your feelings instead of trying to win the person back.

However, certain specific coping strategies may be unhealthy. A meta-analysis of the effects of coping strategies on psychological and physical health (Penley, Tomaka, & Wiebe, 2002) showed that problem-focused coping generally contributed to good health, whereas emotion-focused coping strategies contributed to poorer health. In particular, those who used the emotion-focused strategies of eating more, drinking, sleeping, or using drugs, reported poorer health. Several recent meta-analyses have confirmed this general pattern of findings—problem-focused coping is better than emotion-focused coping in dealing with chronic stress

such as discrimination (Pascoe & Richman, 2009), HIV infection (Moskowitz, Hult, Bussolari, & Acree, 2009), and diabetes (Duangdao & Roesch, 2008).

People are more likely to use problem-focused coping when they appraise a situation as controllable. Among people coping with cancer, those who appraise their situation as a challenge are more likely to use problem-focused coping; those who appraise their situation as harm or loss are more likely to use avoidance coping (Franks & Roesch, 2006). Optimists are more likely than pessimists to employ problem-focused strategies, less likely to use avoidance strategies, and more likely to adjust their coping strategies to meet the specific demands of the situation (Nes & Segerstrom, 2006). Thus, the “wise” use of coping strategies explains why optimists adjust better to stress than pessimists.

Additional categories of coping strategies exist (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004). These include *social coping*, such as seeking support from others, and *meaning-focused coping*, in which the person concentrates on deriving meaning from the stressful experience. For example, people who experience a trauma such as loss of a loved one or a diagnosis of a serious disease often attempt to understand the personal (and often spiritual) meaning within the situation. People who take this approach often succeed (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000) and in doing so often experience better psychological adjustment (Helgeson, Reynolds, & Tomich, 2006; Updegraff, Silver, & Holman, 2008).

Culture exerts a powerful influence on coping, and gender also shows some effects. One might imagine that people who live in cultures that emphasize social harmony would be more likely to use social coping strategies, but such is not the case (Kim, Sherman, & Taylor, 2008). Indeed, Asian Americans are *less* likely than European Americans to seek social support when coping with stress, largely because of the motivation to maintain harmony with others (Wang, Shih, Hu,

TABLE 5.1 Examples of Problem-Focused and Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies

Problem-Focused Coping	Emotion-Focused Coping
Studying for upcoming exam	Writing in a journal
Developing a budget to save money	Exercising
Talking to a friend to solve a conflict	Watching a comedy
Asking boss for extra time to complete a project	Praying, meditating
Trying to get back together with a partner who dumped you	Drinking alcohol or drugs
	Denial

Louie, & Lau, 2010). However, another study (Lincoln, Chatters, & Taylor, 2003) found that African Americans were more likely than European Americans to seek social support from their families. Some studies find cross-cultural similarities in coping strategies, and those studies tend to study people in similar situations. For example, a study of adolescents in seven European nations (Gelhaar et al., 2007) found similarities among coping strategies for adolescents in every nation, especially in job-related situations.

Females tend to use social coping strategies more than men (Tamres, Janicki, & Helgeson, 2002). Aside from this difference, research on gender differences in coping tends to find small differences between women's and men's coping strategies when studying individuals in similar situations (Adams, Aranda, Kemp, & Takagi, 2002; Ronan, Dreer, Dollard, & Ronan, 2004; Sigmon, Stanton, & Snyder, 1995). However, the stressors that men and women face may differ due to gender roles, resulting in gender differences in coping strategies. For example, in one study that found gender differences in coping, women experienced more family-related stressors, but men experienced more finance and work-related stressors (Matud, 2004). Because gender roles vary among cultures, gender and culture may interact to create different situational demands for coping by men and women in various cultures.

IN SUMMARY

Personal resources and a variety of coping strategies allow people to cope with stress to avoid or minimize distress. Social support, defined as the emotional quality of one's social contacts, is inversely related to disease and death. In general, people with high levels of social support experience health advantages and lower mortality. People with adequate social support probably receive more encouragement and advice regarding good health practices and may react less strongly to stress, which may buffer them against the harmful effects of stress more than people who are socially isolated.

Adequate feelings of personal control also seem to enable people to cope better with stress and illness. People who believe that their lives are controlled by fate or outside forces have greater difficulty changing health-related behaviors than do those who believe that the locus of control resides with themselves. The classic studies of nursing home residents demonstrated that when people

are allowed to assume even small amounts of personal control and responsibility, they seem to live longer and healthier lives.

Coping strategies are classified in many ways, but the distinction between problem-focused coping, which is oriented toward solving the problem, and emotion-focused coping, which is oriented toward managing distress associated with stress, is useful. In addition, meaning-focused coping helps people find underlying meaning in negative experiences. In general, problem-focused coping is more effective than other types, but all types of coping strategies may be effective in some situations. The key to successful coping is flexibility, leading to the use of an appropriate strategy for the situation.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Create two profiles of copers: (1) a person who has personal resources and coping strategies that are beneficial when dealing with stress, and (2) a person whose personal resources and coping strategies will likely lead to problems.

5-6 Behavioral Interventions for Managing Stress

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 5-9 Understand the aims of four major types of behavioral interventions for managing stress
- 5-10 Evaluate the effectiveness of each type of behavioral intervention

In addition to studying stress, psychologists develop techniques that teach people how to manage stress. These include relaxation training, cognitive behavioral therapy, emotional disclosure, and mindfulness.

Relaxation Training

Relaxation training is perhaps the simplest and easiest to use of all psychological interventions, and relaxation may be the key ingredient in other types of therapeutic interventions for managing stress.

What is Relaxation Training? During the 1930s, Edmond Jacobson (1938) discussed a type of relaxation he called *progressive muscle relaxation*. With this procedure, patients first receive the explanation that their present tension is mostly a physical state resulting from tense muscles. While reclining in a comfortable chair, often with eyes closed and with no distracting lights or sounds, patients first breathe deeply and exhale slowly. After this, the series of deep muscle relaxation exercises begins, a process described in the Becoming Healthier box. Once patients learn the relaxation technique, they may practice independently or with pre-recorded audiotapes at home. Length of relaxation training programs varies, but six to eight weeks and about 10 sessions with an instructor are usually sufficient to allow patients to easily and independently enter a state of deep relaxation (Blanchard & Andrasik, 1985).

Autogenics training is another approach to relaxation. Pioneered by Johannes Schultz during the 1920s and 1930s in Germany, the technique was refined by Wolfgang Luthe (Naylor & Marshall, 2007). Autogenics training consists of a series of exercises designed to reduce muscle tension, change the way people think, and change the content of people's thoughts. The process begins with a mental check of the body and proceeds with suggestions for relaxation and warmth throughout the

body. Advocates contend that practicing autogenics for 10 minutes at least twice a day reduces stress and thus improves health.

How Effective is Relaxation Training? Like other psychological interventions, relaxation is effective only if it proves more powerful than a control situation, or placebo. Relaxation techniques generally meet this criterion (Jacobs, 2001). Indeed, relaxation may be an essential part of other interventions such as biofeedback and hypnotic treatment (see Chapter 8).

Relaxation training was a component in a successful stress management program for college students (Iglesias et al., 2005), and children were able to learn and to benefit from relaxation training (Lohaus & Klein-Hessling, 2003). Both progressive muscle relaxation and autogenic training are components in effective treatment programs for stress-related disorders such as depression, anxiety, hypertension, and insomnia (Stetter & Kupper, 2002; McCallie, Blum, & Hood, 2006). Techniques also help reduce hormonal stress responses following breast cancer surgery (Phillips et al., 2011) and promote faster healing following gallbladder surgery (Broadbent et al., 2012). **Table 5.2** summarizes the effectiveness of relaxation techniques for stress-related problems.



BECOMING HEALTHIER

Progressive muscle relaxation is a technique that you may be able to use to cope with stress and pain. Although some people may need the help of a trained therapist to master this approach, others are able to train themselves. To learn progressive muscle relaxation, recline in a comfortable chair in a room with no distractions. You may wish to remove your shoes and either dim the lights or close your eyes to enhance relaxation. Next, breathe deeply and exhale slowly. Repeat this deep breathing exercise several times until you begin to feel your body becoming more and more relaxed.

The next step is to select a muscle group (for example, your left hand) and deliberately tense that group of muscles. If you begin with your hand, make a fist and squeeze the fingers into your hand as hard as you can. Hold that tension for about 10 seconds and then slowly release the tension, concentrating on the relaxing, soothing sensations in your hand as the tension gradually drains away. Once the left hand is relaxed, shift to the right hand and repeat the procedure, while keeping your left hand as relaxed as possible. After both hands are relaxed, go through the same tensing and relaxing

sequence progressively with other muscle groups, including the arms, shoulders, neck, mouth, tongue, forehead, eyes, toes, feet, calves, thighs, back, and stomach. Then repeat the deep breathing exercises until you achieve a complete feeling of relaxation. Focus on the enjoyable sensation of relaxation, restricting your attention to the pleasant internal events and away from irritating external sources of pain or stress. You will probably need to practice this procedure several times to learn to quickly place your body into a state of deep relaxation.

TABLE 5.2 Effectiveness of Relaxation Techniques

Problems	Findings	Studies
1. Stress management for college students	Relaxation is a component in successful stress management.	Iglesias et al., 2005
2. Depression, anxiety, hypertension, and insomnia	Autogenics and progressive muscle relaxation are effective components in programs to manage these disorders.	McCallie et al., 2006; Stetter & Kupper, 2002
3. Laboratory stress	Progressive muscle relaxation produces changes in heart rate, skin conductance, and skin temperature in children.	Lohaus & Klein-Hessling, 2003
4. Stress following surgery for breast cancer	Relaxation training is an important component of a stress management program that lowered women's cortisol levels over a 12-month period.	Phillips et al., 2011
5. Recovery following gallbladder surgery	Relaxation training leads to lower perceived stress and faster wound healing.	Broadbent et al., 2012

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Health psychologists use the same types of interventions for managing stress that they use for other behavior problems, including *cognitive behavioral therapy*. This approach is a combination of *behavior modification*, which arose from the laboratory research on operant conditioning, and *cognitive therapy*, which can be traced to research on mental processes. Cognitive behavioral therapy is more effective than any other approach for stress management.

What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy? **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** is a type of therapy that aims to develop beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and skills to make positive changes in behavior. Like cognitive therapy, CBT assumes that thoughts and feelings are the basis of behavior, so CBT begins with changing attitudes. Like behavior modification, CBT focuses on modifying environmental contingencies and building skills to change observable behavior.

An example of CBT for stress management is the stress inoculation program developed by Donald Meichenbaum and Roy Cameron (1983; Meichenbaum, 2007). The procedure works in a manner analogous to vaccination. By introducing a weakened dose of a pathogen (in this case, the pathogen is stress), the therapist attempts to build some immunity against high levels of stress. Stress inoculation includes three stages: conceptualization, skills acquisition and rehearsal, and follow-through or application. The *conceptualization*

stage is a cognitive intervention in which the therapist works with clients to identify and clarify their problems. During this overtly educational stage, patients learn about stress inoculation and how this technique can reduce their stress. The *skills acquisition and rehearsal* stage involves both educational and behavioral components to enhance patients' repertoire of coping skills. At this time, patients learn and practice new ways of coping with stress. One of the goals of this stage is to improve self-instruction by changing cognitions, a process that includes monitoring one's internal monologue—that is, self-talk. During the *application and follow-through* stage, patients put into practice the cognitive changes they have achieved in the two previous stages.

Another CBT approach to stress is cognitive behavioral stress management (CBSM; Antoni, Ironson, & Schneiderman, 2007), a 10-week group intervention that shares many features with stress inoculation training. CBSM also works toward changing cognitions concerning stress, enlarging clients' repertoire of coping skills, and guiding clients to apply these skills in effective ways. Other researchers use variations of CBT to investigate the effectiveness of this approach to stress management.

How Effective is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?

Research on the efficacy of CBT indicates that it is effective for both prevention and management of stress and stress-related disorders. Furthermore, CBT is effective with a wide variety of clients, and is one of the most effective techniques for reducing stress among college students (Regehr, Glancy, & Pitts, 2013).

An early meta-analysis (Saunders, Driskell, Johnston, & Sales, 1996) of nearly 40 studies found that stress inoculation training decreased anxiety and raised performance under stress. Stress inoculation training is effective for a range of stressors. For example, one program (Sheehy & Horan, 2004) tested the benefits of stress inoculation training for first-year law students to determine if the training helped these students alleviate some of their anxiety and stress. The program succeeded in meeting those goals and also raised grades.

Stress inoculation can also be effective in helping victims of trauma manage their severe distress (Cahill & Foa, 2007). For example, stress inoculation is helpful for crime victims who experience PTSD (Hembree & Foa, 2003). Researchers adapted stress inoculation therapy for use on the Internet (Litz, Williams, Wang, Bryant, & Engel, 2004), making it available to a larger number of people.

Other varieties of cognitive behavioral therapy are effective for stress management, including CBSM. This intervention may even help counteract the negative effects of stress by moderating the increased cortisol production that accompanies the stress response (Antoni et al., 2009; Gaab, Sonderegger, Scherrer, & Ehler, 2007), an accomplishment that few techniques have achieved (see Chapter 6). One recent study showed that a prenatal CBSM intervention reduced cortisol production of both mothers *and* their infants (Urizar & Muñoz, 2011). However, these effects may not include dramatic improvement in immune functioning. A meta-analysis of cognitive behavioral interventions for people who are HIV positive (Crepaz et al., 2008) revealed significant positive effects for reductions in stress, depression, anxiety, and anger, but immune functioning was less improved. Like stress inoculation programs, cognitive behavioral interventions are also adapted for use on the Internet (Benight, Ruzek, & Waldrep, 2008).

CBSM also helps those with substance abuse problems manage stress-induced cravings, which could give a boost to substance abuse treatment (Back, Gentilin, & Brady, 2007). Cognitive behavioral therapy is also an effective intervention for PTSD (Bisson & Andrew, 2007), chronic back pain (Hoffman, Papas, Chatkoff, & Kerns, 2007), and chronic fatigue syndrome (Lopez et al., 2011). Cognitive behavioral techniques are used in workplace stress management, and this approach has demonstrated consistently larger effects than other programs (Richardson & Rothstein, 2008). Furthermore, cognitive behavioral stress techniques can help students improve their performance; a cognitive behavioral

stress intervention improved students' motivations and scores on standardized exams (Keogh, Bond, & Flaxman, 2006).

In summary, many studies show that cognitive behavioral therapy interventions are effective for stress management for people with a variety of stress-related problems. **Table 5.3** summarizes the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy for stress-related problems.

Emotional Disclosure

Can health be improved by putting stressful experiences into words? Research by James Pennebaker and colleagues (Pennebaker, Barger, & Tiebout, 1989) shows that emotional self-disclosure improves both psychological and physical health. Subsequent research has extended the positive effects of emotional disclosure to a variety of people and settings.

What is Emotional Disclosure? **Emotional disclosure** is a therapeutic technique in which people express their strong emotions by talking or writing about negative events that precipitated those emotions. For centuries, confession of sinful deeds has been part of personal healing in many religious rituals. During the late 19th century, Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud (1895/1955) recognized the value of the “talking cure,” and **catharsis**—the verbal expression of emotions—became an important part of psychotherapy. Pennebaker took the notion of catharsis beyond Breuer and Freud, by demonstrating the health benefits of talking or writing about traumatic life events.

The general pattern of Pennebaker's research is to ask people to write or talk about traumatic events for 15 to 20 minutes, three or four times a week. Emotional disclosure should be distinguished from emotional expression, which refers to emotional outbursts or emotional venting, such as crying, laughing, yelling, or throwing objects. Emotional disclosure, in contrast, involves the transfer of emotions into language and thus requires a measure of self-reflection. Emotional outbursts are often unhealthy and may add more stress to an already unpleasant situation.

In one of their early studies on emotional disclosure, Pennebaker and colleagues (Pennebaker et al., 1989) asked survivors of the Holocaust to talk for one to two hours about their war experiences. Those survivors who disclosed the most personally traumatic experiences had better subsequent health than survivors who expressed less painful experiences. Since then, Pennebaker and his colleagues have investigated other

TABLE 5.3 Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Problems	Findings	Studies
1. Performance anxiety	Inoculation training reduces performance anxiety and boosts performance under stress.	Saunders et al., 1996
2. Stress of law school	Stress inoculation training decreases stress and increases grades.	Sheehy & Horan, 2004
3. Posttraumatic stress disorder	Inoculation procedures lessen negative effects of posttraumatic stress disorder.	Cahill & Foa, 2007; Hembree & Foa, 2003; Litz et al., 2004
4. Hormonal stress responses	Cognitive behavioral stress management moderates cortisol production during stress response.	Antoni et al., 2009; Gaab et al., 2007; Urizar & Muñoz, 2011
5. Stress, anxiety, depression in people with HIV	Cognitive behavioral therapy improves these symptoms of HIV.	Crepaz et al., 2008
6. Stress-related cravings	Cognitive behavioral stress management decreased cravings.	Back et al., 2007
7. Psychological and physical health symptoms	Cognitive behavioral therapy is an effective treatment.	Bisson & Andrew, 2007; Hoffman et al., 2007; Lopez et al., 2011
8. Workplace stress	Cognitive behavioral therapy is effective.	Richardson & Rothstein, 2008
9. School-related stress	Cognitive behavioral therapy boosts motivation and test performance.	Keogh et al., 2006

forms of emotional disclosure, such as asking people to talk into a tape recorder, write their thoughts privately, or speak to a therapist about highly stressful events. With each of these techniques, the key ingredient is language—emotions must be expressed through language. Indeed, the simple task of assigning words to negative emotional stimuli lessens their emotional impact, by dampening the activity of the amygdala, a brain structure involved in the fear response (Lieberman et al., 2007; Lieberman et al., 2011).

The physical and psychological changes in people who use emotional disclosure are typically compared with those of a control group, who are asked to write or talk about superficial events. This relatively simple procedure is responsible for physiological changes such as fewer physician visits, improved immune functioning, and lower rates of asthma, arthritis, cancer, and heart disease. In addition, disclosure has produced psychological and behavioral changes, such as fewer depressive symptoms before taking graduate school entrance exams and better performance on those exams (Frattaroli, Thomas, & Lyubomirsky, 2011).

How Effective is Emotional Disclosure? A substantial number of studies by Pennebaker's team and other

researchers demonstrate the effectiveness of disclosure in reducing a variety of illnesses. A review of 146 studies of emotional disclosure found a positive effect on most psychological outcomes and some physical health outcomes (Frattaroli, 2006). This review also identified several factors that make emotional disclosure more effective. One of these factors is the amount of stress in a person's life: People who experience more stress benefit from emotional disclosure more than those who experience less stress. Other factors that make emotional disclosure more effective include writing in private, writing for more than 15 minutes, and writing about a stressful event not previously shared with other people. Importantly, the effectiveness of emotional disclosure does not differ based on gender, age, or ethnicity (Frattaroli, 2006).

A notable example of the effect of emotional disclosure on physical health includes an early study that showed that students who disclosed feelings about entering college had fewer illnesses than those who wrote about superficial topics (Pennebaker, Colder, & Sharp, 1990). Despite its emotional basis, a meta-analysis of studies on emotional disclosure (Frisina, Borod, & Lepore, 2004) concluded that this approach

is more effective in helping people with physical than psychological problems. Emotional disclosure can reduce symptoms in patients with asthma and arthritis (Smyth, Stone, Hurewitz, & Kaell, 1999) and buffer some of the problems associated with breast cancer among women who perceive low levels of social support (Low, Stanton, Bower, & Gyllenhammer, 2010).

Must the emotional disclosure focus on trauma? Some evidence indicates that when people focus on finding some positive aspect of a traumatic experience, they may accrue even more benefits than when they focus on the negative aspects of the experience. In one study, when participants were led to a less negative interpretation of a traumatic event, they experienced greater benefits than did those whose negative interpretations were validated (Lepore, Fernandez-Berrocal, Ragan, & Ramos, 2004). Other research suggests that

when writing about a stressful situation, developing a plan for dealing with the situation (Lestideau & Lavallee, 2007) or focusing on positive aspects of the stressor (Lu & Stanton, 2010) boosts the benefits of expressive writing. These findings extend Pennebaker's research on disclosure by suggesting that people who concentrate on the positive aspects of a traumatic experience or develop a plan to deal with the stressful situation can receive health benefits equal or superior to those who simply write about a traumatic life event.

Pennebaker's research adds an effective and easily accessible tool to the arsenal of strategies for managing stress. Indeed, benefits can occur through a program of writing by e-mail (Sheese, Brown, & Graziano, 2004) or through an Internet-based intervention (Possemato, Ouimette, & Geller, 2010). See [Table 5.4](#) for a summary of the effectiveness of self-disclosure through writing or talking.

Mindfulness

While a graduate student in molecular biology at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Jon Kabat-Zinn chanced upon small talk given by a Zen missionary on the topic of meditation. The missionary described his experience in a Zen monastery: primitive, no heat, and freezing cold in the winter. However, within several months at the monastery, the missionary observed that his chronic ulcers began to subside and never returned again.

What could meditation provide that might cause stress-related ailments such as chronic ulcers to subside, especially under seemingly unpleasant living conditions? Dr. Kabat-Zinn dedicated his career to investigating this question, and for the next three decades spearheaded a movement to examine the possible mental health and physical health benefits of mindfulness meditation.

What is Mindfulness? Although there are many definitions of mindfulness, most Western views of mindfulness define it as a quality of consciousness or awareness that comes about through intentionally focusing one's attention on the present moment in a nonjudgmental and accepting manner (Kabat-Zinn, 1993). Kabat-Zinn developed an eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction program that taught people mindfulness skills through exercises such as focusing attention on one's immediate breathing, thoughts, bodily sensations, sounds, and everyday activities. For most people, attending to one's present environment and sensations is



Jerome Scholler/Shutterstock.com

Writing about traumatic or highly stressful events produces physical as well as emotional benefits.

TABLE 5.4 Effectiveness of Emotional Disclosure

Problems	Findings	Studies
1. General health problems	Holocaust survivors who talked most about their experience had fewer health problems 14 months later.	Pennebaker et al., 1989
2. Performance on graduate entrance exams (GRE, LSAT, MCAT)	Written disclosure about upcoming exam improved performance.	Frattaroli et al., 2011
3. Emotional and physical symptoms	Disclosure associated with better psychological and physical health outcomes.	Frisina et al., 2004; Frattaroli, 2006
4. Anxiety about entering college	Students who disclosed had fewer illnesses.	Pennebaker et al., 1990
5. Asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and living with cancer	Keeping a journal of stressful events reduces symptoms and improves functioning.	Smyth et al., 1999
6. Emotional and physical symptoms of breast cancer	Disclosure associated with less distress among women with low social support.	Low et al., 2010
7. Emotional and physical symptoms	Focusing on positive aspects of situation produced greater benefits.	Lepore et al., 2004; Lu & Stanton, 2010
8. Emotional and physical symptoms	Focusing on developing a plan produced greater benefits than focusing only on emotions.	Lestideau & Lavallee, 2007
9. Problems in mental and physical health	E-mail and Internet intervention about traumatic events showed benefits.	Sheese et al., 2004; Possemato et al., 2010

not a typical response to stress; people have a natural tendency to respond to stress with preoccupation on one's past or ongoing troubles and their effects on their future. Mindfulness meditation aims to take this preoccupation with the past and future, and redirect it toward the present moment.

How Effective is Mindfulness? Reviews of this literature indeed suggest that mindfulness-based stress reduction interventions can decrease stress, depression, and anxiety in breast cancer patients (Cramer, Lauche, Paul, & Dobos, 2012; Zainal, Booth, & Huppert, 2013), increase acceptance of pain in patients with low back pain (Cramer, Haller, Lauche, & Dobos, 2012), decrease distress and possibly improve disease progression among people living with HIV (Riley & Kalichman, 2015). While the benefits of mindfulness are most pronounced when looking at outcomes such as self-reported stress, depression, and anxiety, the effects of mindfulness may also extend to physical health outcomes as well. For example, a mindfulness-based stress reduction intervention was associated with better outcomes in terms of immune measures, stress hormones,

and blood pressure in cancer patients (Carlson, Speca, Faris, & Patel, 2007), as well as reduced blood pressure among adults at risk for hypertension (Hughes et al., 2013). Furthermore, the effects of mindfulness-based stress reduction interventions on mental health seem to be due to their ability to improve mindfulness, reduce worry, and reduce people's tendency to dwell on stressful experiences (Gu, Strauss, Bond, & Cavanagh, 2015). Although most mindfulness-based stress reduction interventions last eight weeks, some research shows that even participating in fewer sessions can also lead to similar benefits (Carmody & Baer, 2009; Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, & Oh, 2010).

IN SUMMARY

Health psychologists help people cope with stress by using relaxation training, cognitive behavioral therapy, emotional disclosure, and mindfulness. Relaxation techniques include progressive muscle relaxation and autogenics training. Relaxation approaches have some success in helping patients

manage stress and anxiety and are generally more effective than a placebo.

Cognitive behavioral therapy draws upon operant conditioning and behavior modification as well as cognitive therapy, which strives to change behavior through changing attitudes and beliefs. Cognitive behavioral therapists attempt to get patients to think differently about their stress experiences and teach strategies that lead to more effective self-management.

Stress inoculation and CBSM are types of cognitive behavioral therapy interventions. Stress inoculation introduces low levels of stress and then teaches skills for coping and application of those skills. Stress inoculation and CBSM are successful interventions for preventing stress and in treating a wide variety of stress problems, including anxiety and depression in people with HIV, stress cravings in people with substance use disorders, PTSD, workplace stress, and school-related stress.

Emotional disclosure calls for patients to disclose strong negative emotions, most often through

writing. People using this technique write about traumatic life events for 15 to 20 minutes, three or four times a week. Emotional disclosure generally enhances health, relieves anxiety, and reduces visits to health care providers, and may reduce the symptoms of asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and cancer.

Mindfulness-based stress reduction interventions foster a nonjudgmental focus and attention on the present moment. Mindfulness interventions can decrease stress, depression, anxiety, and may also improve physiological measures such as blood pressure as well.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Consider each of the four types of behavioral interventions described in this section and identify whether each type aims to address the (1) thoughts, (2) emotions, and (3) behaviors that tend to make stress worse.

Questions

This chapter has addressed six basic questions:

1. What is the physiology of stress?

The nervous system plays a central role in the physiology of stress. When a person perceives stress, the sympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system stimulates the adrenal medulla, producing catecholamines and arousing the person from a resting state. The perception of stress also prompts a second route of response through the pituitary gland, which releases adrenocorticotrophic hormone. This hormone, in turn, affects the adrenal cortex, which produces glucocorticoids. These hormones prepare the body to resist stress.

2. What theories explain stress?

Hans Selye and Richard Lazarus both proposed theories of stress. During his career, Selye defined stress first as a stimulus and then as a response. Whenever the body encounters a disruptive stimulus, it mobilizes itself in a generalized attempt to adapt to that stimulus. Selye called this mobilization the general adaptation syndrome. The GAS has three stages—alarm, resistance, and exhaustion—and the potential for trauma or illness exists at all

three stages. Lazarus insisted that a person's perception of a situation is the most significant component of stress. To Lazarus, stress depends on one's appraisal of an event rather than on the event itself. Whether or not stress produces illness is closely tied to one's vulnerability as well as to one's perceived ability to cope with the situation.

3. How has stress been measured?

Several methods exist for assessing stress, including physiological and biochemical measures and self-reports of stressful events. Most life events scales are patterned after Holmes and Rahe's Social Readjustment Rating Scale. Some of these instruments include only undesirable events, but the SRRS and other self-report inventories are based on the premise that any major change is stressful. Lazarus and his associates pioneered scales that measure daily hassles and uplifts. These scales, which generally have better validity than the SRRS, emphasize the severity of the event as perceived by the person.

Physiological and biochemical measures have the advantage of good reliability, whereas self-report inventories pose more problems in demonstrating reliability and validity. Although most

self-report inventories have acceptable reliability, their ability to predict illness remains to be established. For these stress inventories to predict illness, two conditions must be met: First, they must be valid measures of stress; second, stress must be related to illness. Chapter 6 takes up the question of whether stress causes illness.

4. What sources produce stress?

Sources of stress can be categorized as cataclysmic events, life events, and daily hassles. Cataclysmic events include sudden, unexpected events that produce major demands for adaptation. Such events include natural disasters such as earthquakes and hurricanes and intentional events such as terrorist attacks. Posttraumatic stress disorder is a possibility in the aftermath of such events.

Life events such as divorce, criminal victimization, or death of a family member also produce major life changes and require adaptation, but life events are usually not as sudden and dramatic as cataclysmic events. Daily hassles are even smaller and more common but produce distress. Such daily events may arise from the community, as with noise, crowding, and pollution; from workplace conditions, such as work with high demands and little control; or from conflicts in relationships.

5. What factors influence coping, and what strategies are effective?

Factors that influence coping include social support, personal control, and personal hardiness. Social support, defined as the emotional quality of one's social contacts, is important to a person's ability to cope and to one's health. People with social support receive more encouragement and advice to seek medical care, and social support may provide a buffer against the physical effects of stress. Second, people's beliefs that they have control over the events of their life seem to have a positive impact on health. Even a sense of control over small matters may improve health and prolong life. The factor of personal hardiness includes components of commitment, control, and interpreting events as challenges rather than as stressors.

People use a variety of strategies to cope with stress, all of which may be successful. Problem-focused coping is often a better choice than emotion-focused efforts because problem-focused coping can change the source of the problem, eliminating the stress-producing situation.

Emotion-focused coping is oriented toward managing the distress that accompanies stress. Research indicates that most people use a variety of coping strategies, often in combination, and this flexibility is important for effective coping.

6. What behavioral techniques are effective for stress management?

Four types of interventions are available to health psychologists in helping people cope with stress. First, relaxation training can help people cope with a variety of stress problems. Second, cognitive behavioral therapy—including stress inoculation and cognitive behavioral stress management—is effective in reducing both stress and stress-related disorders such as posttraumatic stress disorder. Third, emotional disclosure—including writing about traumatic events—can help people recover from traumatic experiences and experience better psychological and physical health. Fourth, mindfulness-based stress reduction interventions can help reduce stress, depression, and anxiety.

Suggested Readings

- Kemeny, M. E. (2003). The psychobiology of stress. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 12, 124–129. This concise review furnishes a summary of the physiology of stress, how stress can “get under the skin” to influence disease, and some psychosocial factors that moderate this process.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer. In this classic book, Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman present a comprehensive treatment of Lazarus's views of stress, cognitive appraisal, and coping. This book also discusses the relevant literature up to that time.
- McEwen, B. S. (2005). Stressed or stressed out: What is the difference? *Journal of Psychiatry and Neuroscience*, 30, 315–318. This brief, readable article summarizes the evolution of the concept of stress, including Selye's work and changes to that framework.
- Monroe, S. M. (2008). Modern approaches to conceptualizing and measuring human life stress. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 4, 33–52. This readable review describes many of the issues in defining and measuring stress in humans, as well as understanding pathways by which life stress may influence physical health.



PeopleImages/E+/Getty Images

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 6-1** Identify the major organs and cells of the immune system
- 6-2** Understand the difference between nonspecific and specific immunity, as well as the organs, tissues, and cells involved in each form of immunity
- 6-3** Familiarize yourself with the characteristics of immune system disorders
- 6-4** Understand the aims of the field of psychoneuroimmunology, as well as some of the common methods used in psychoneuroimmunology research
- 6-5** Recognize the three major routes by which stress can influence the functioning of the immune system
- 6-6** Understand the diathesis–stress model and how it helps explain why stress may be especially harmful for some people
- 6-7** Recognize the physical health conditions that are linked to stress and the mechanisms that link stress to these conditions
- 6-8** Understand how stress can increase people's risk for psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder

CHAPTER 6

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Big City Taxi Drivers

- Physiology of the Immune System
- Psychoneuroimmunology
- Does Stress Cause Disease?

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on three basic questions:

1. How does the immune system function?
2. How does the field of psychoneuroimmunology relate behavior to disease?
3. Does stress cause disease?

Understanding Stress, Immunity, and Disease

This chapter reviews the evidence relating to stress as a possible cause of disease. In Chapter 5, you learned that stress could influence health-related behaviors, which can increase risk for disease or death. If stress can also influence physical disease *directly*, some mechanism must exist to allow this interaction. In this chapter, we will examine how stress can increase risk for health problems through biological processes. We begin with a discussion of the immune system, which protects the body against stress-related diseases and provides one mechanism for stress to cause disease.

6-1 Physiology of the Immune System

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 6-1** Identify the major organs and cells of the immune system
- 6-2** Understand the difference between nonspecific and specific immunity, as well as the organs, tissues, and cells involved in each form of immunity
- 6-3** Familiarize yourself with the characteristics of immune system disorders

At any given moment, you are surrounded by microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi. Some of these microorganisms are harmless, but others can endanger your health. The immune system consists of tissues, organs, and processes that protect the body from invasion by such foreign microorganisms. In addition, the immune system performs housekeeping functions by removing worn-out or damaged cells and patrolling for mutant cells. Once the immune system locates these invaders and renegades, it activates processes to eliminate them. Thus, a well-functioning immune system plays a crucial role in maintaining health.



Real-World Profile of **BIG CITY TAXI DRIVERS**



Arata Photography/Moment/Getty Images

One of the most stressful occupations is driving a taxicab, particularly in a bustling metropolis such as New York City. Taxi drivers often earn little money, work 60 to 70 hours per week, and face steep competition from other drivers and increasing job insecurity. In addition to navigating hectic traffic under intense time pressures, taxi drivers deal with impatient customers, poor weather and road conditions, unsuspecting pedestrians and cyclists, and the need to pack in as many customers in each day as possible. Taxi drivers who are ethnic minorities may also experience discrimination because of both their race and occupation. Taxi drivers also face homicide risks far higher than those in most other occupations.

“You never know who’s getting in your cab, so you have to be constantly vigilant and expect trouble at any time,” says Kathy Pavlofsky, a taxi driver from Berkeley, California (Kloberdanz, 2016).

The health risks of being a cab driver extend beyond assault and homicide. Taxi drivers are at increased risk for obesity and diabetes, due to a largely sedentary occupation and frequent reliance on a fast-food diet. The small compartment of a taxicab and the continual exposure to strangers also put cab drivers at high risk of exposure to airborne viruses. During the COVID-19 pandemic, New York City taxi drivers faced additional stresses: loss of income due to the city’s stay-at-home orders, and threat of COVID-19 infection by the few customers they were fortunate to find (Chan, 2020).

This constant stress increases the risk of long-term health problems. A survey by the New York Taxi Worker’s Alliance found that more than 20% of drivers have cardiovascular disease or cancer. By other estimates, more than 60% of taxi drivers have high blood pressure.

For example, Rafael Arias, a New York City taxi driver for 17 years, developed a buildup of blood in his brain that, without treatment, could have developed into a stroke. His doctor noted stress as a likely cause of the problem.

Emotional problems may also be common among people in highly stressful occupations such as taxi drivers. “Many of them need to see a psychiatrist,” says Maria Ramos, an activist who recognized the stress-related problems of New York City cab drivers and created a citywide program called the Taxi/Limousine Drivers Health Initiative to help alleviate the health problems the group faces (Camhi, 2012). Ramos received a Community Health Leaders Award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for recognizing and addressing the health needs of drivers such as Arias.

In this chapter, you will learn how stress—such as that faced by taxi drivers and others in highly stressful occupations—can increase one’s risk for a variety of health problem, as well as the biological pathways by which stress can influence disease.

Organs of the Immune System

The immune system is spread throughout the body in the form of the **lymphatic system**. The tissue of the lymphatic system is **lymph**; it consists of the tissue components of blood other than red cells and platelets. In the process of vascular circulation, fluid and *leukocytes* (white blood cells) leak from the capillaries and escape the circulatory system. Body cells also secrete white

blood cells. This tissue fluid is referred to as *lymph* when it enters the lymph vessels, which circulate lymph and eventually return it to the bloodstream.

Lymph circulates by entering the lymphatic system and then reentering the bloodstream rather than staying exclusively in the lymphatic system. The structure of the lymphatic system (see **Figure 6.1**) roughly parallels the circulatory system for blood. In its circulation, all lymph travels through at least one **lymph node**.

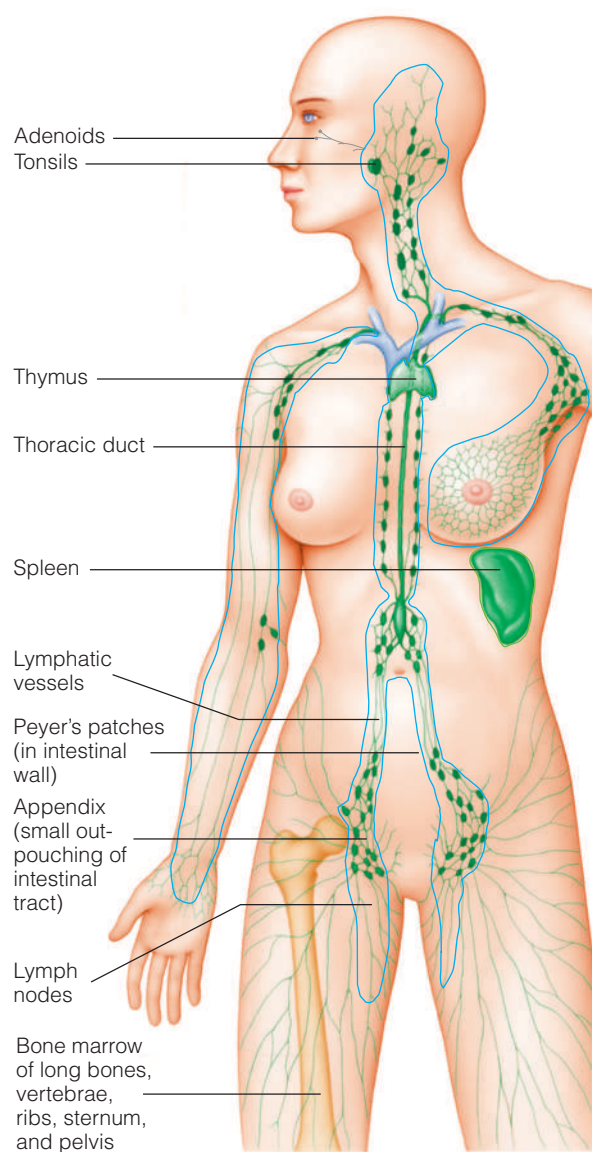


FIGURE 6.1 Lymphatic system.

Source: *Introduction to microbiology* (p. 407), by J. L. Ingraham & C. A. Ingraham. From INGRAHAM/INGRAHAM, *Introduction to Microbiology*, 1E. © 1995 Cengage Learning.

The lymph nodes are round or oval capsules spaced throughout the lymphatic system that help clean lymph of cellular debris, bacteria, and even dust that has entered the body.

Lymphocytes are a type of white blood cell found in lymph. There are several types of lymphocytes, the most fully understood of which are T-lymphocytes, or **T-cells**; B-lymphocytes, or **B-cells**; and **natural killer**

(**NK**) **cells**. Lymphocytes originate in the bone marrow, but they mature and differentiate in other structures of the immune system. In addition to lymphocytes, two other types of leukocytes are granulocytes and monocytes/macrophages. These leukocytes have roles in the nonspecific and specific immune system responses (discussed in detail later).

The **thymus**, which has endocrine functions, secretes a hormone called **thymosin**, which is involved in the maturation and differentiation of the T-cells. Interestingly, the thymus is largest during infancy and childhood and then atrophies during adulthood. Its function is not entirely understood, but the thymus is clearly important in the immune system because its removal impairs immune function. Its atrophy also suggests that the immune system's production of T-cells is more efficient during childhood and that aging is related to lowered immune efficiency (Briones, 2007). The **tonsils** are masses of lymphatic tissue located in the throat. Their function is akin to that of the lymph nodes: trapping and killing invading cells and particles. The **spleen**, an organ near the stomach in the abdominal cavity, is one site in which lymphocytes mature. In addition, it serves as a holding station for lymphocytes as well as a disposal site for worn-out blood cells.

Thus, the organs of the immune system produce, store, and circulate lymph throughout the rest of the body. The surveillance and protection that the immune system offers is not limited to the lymph nodes. Rather, it takes place in other tissues of the body containing lymphocytes. To protect the entire body, immune function must occur in all parts of the body.

Function of the Immune System

The immune system's function is to defend against foreign substances that the body encounters. The immune system must be extraordinarily effective to prevent 100% of the invading bacteria, viruses, and fungi from damaging our bodies. Few other body functions must operate at 100% efficiency, but when this system performs at some lesser capacity, the person (or animal) becomes vulnerable.

Invading organisms can enter the body in many ways, and the immune system has methods to combat each mode of entry. In general, there are two ways the immune system fights invading foreign substances: general (nonspecific) response and specific response. Both may be involved in fighting foreign substances.

Nonspecific Immune System Responses To enter the body, foreign substances must first pass the skin and mucous membranes. Thus, these organs and tissues are the body's first line of defense against the outside world. Foreign substances capable of passing these barriers face two general (nonspecific) mechanisms. One is **phagocytosis**, which is the attacking of foreign particles by cells of the immune system. Two types of leukocytes perform this function. **Granulocytes** contain granules filled with chemicals. When these cells encounter invading substances, they release their chemicals, which attack the invaders. **Macrophages** perform a variety of immune functions, including scavenging for worn-out cells and debris, initiating specific immune responses, and secreting a variety of chemicals that break down the cell membranes of invaders. Thus, phagocytosis involves several mechanisms that can quickly result in the destruction of invading bacteria, viruses, and fungi. However, some invaders escape this nonspecific action.

A second type of nonspecific immune system response is **inflammation**, which works to restore tissues damaged by invaders. When an injury occurs, blood vessels in the injured area dilate, increasing blood flow to the tissues and causing the warmth and redness that accompany inflammation. The damaged cells release enzymes that help destroy invading microorganisms; these enzymes can also aid in their own digestion, should the cells die. Both granulocytes and macrophages migrate to the site of injury to battle the invaders. Finally, tissue repair begins. **Figure 6.2** illustrates the process of inflammation.

Specific Immune Systems Responses. Specific immune responses are specific to one invader, such as a certain virus or bacterium. Two types of lymphocytes—T-cells and B-cells—carry out specific immune responses. When a lymphocyte encounters a foreign substance for the first time, both the general response and a specific response occur. Invading microorganisms are killed and eaten by macrophages, which present fragments of these invaders to T-cells that have moved to the area of inflammation. This contact sensitizes the T-cells, and they acquire specific receptors on their surfaces that enable them to recognize the invader. An army of *cytotoxic T-cells* forms through this process, and it soon mobilizes a direct attack on the invaders. This process is referred to as *cell-mediated immunity* because it occurs at the level of the body cells rather than in the bloodstream. Cell-mediated immunity

is especially effective against fungi, viruses that have already entered the cells, parasites, and mutations of body cells.

The other variety of lymphocyte, the B-cell, mobilizes an indirect attack on invading microorganisms. With the help of one variety of T-cell (the *helper T-cell*), B-cells differentiate into **plasma cells** and secrete **antibodies**. Each antibody is manufactured in response to a specific invader. Foreign substances that provoke antibody manufacture are called **antigens** (for antibody generator). Antibodies circulate, find their antigens, bind to them, and mark them for future destruction. **Figure 6.3** shows the differentiation of T-cells and B-cells.

The specific reactions of the immune system constitute the *primary immune response*. **Figure 6.4** shows the development of the primary immune response and depicts how subsequent exposure activates the *secondary immune response*. During initial exposure to an invader, some of the sensitized T-cells and B-cells replicate and, rather than go into action, are held in reserve. These *memory lymphocytes* form the basis for a rapid immune response on second exposure to the same invader. Memory lymphocytes can persist for years but will not be activated unless the antigen invader reappears. If it does, then the memory lymphocytes initiate the same sort of direct and indirect attacks that occurred at the first exposure, but much more rapidly. This specifically tailored rapid response to foreign microorganisms that occurs with repeated exposure is what most people consider **immunity**.

This system of immune response through B-cell recognition of antigens and their manufacture of antibodies is called **humoral immunity** because it happens in the bloodstream. The process is especially effective in fighting viruses that have already entered the cells, parasites, and mutations of body cells.

Creating Immunity. One widely used method to induce immunity is **vaccination**. In vaccination, a weakened form of a virus or a bacterium is introduced into the body, stimulating the production of antibodies. These antibodies then confer immunity for an extended period. Smallpox, which once killed thousands of people each year, was eradicated using vaccination. As a result, people are no longer vaccinated against this disease.

Other vaccines exist for a variety of diseases. They are especially useful in the prevention of viral infections. However, immunity must be created for each specific virus, and thousands of viruses exist. Even viral diseases

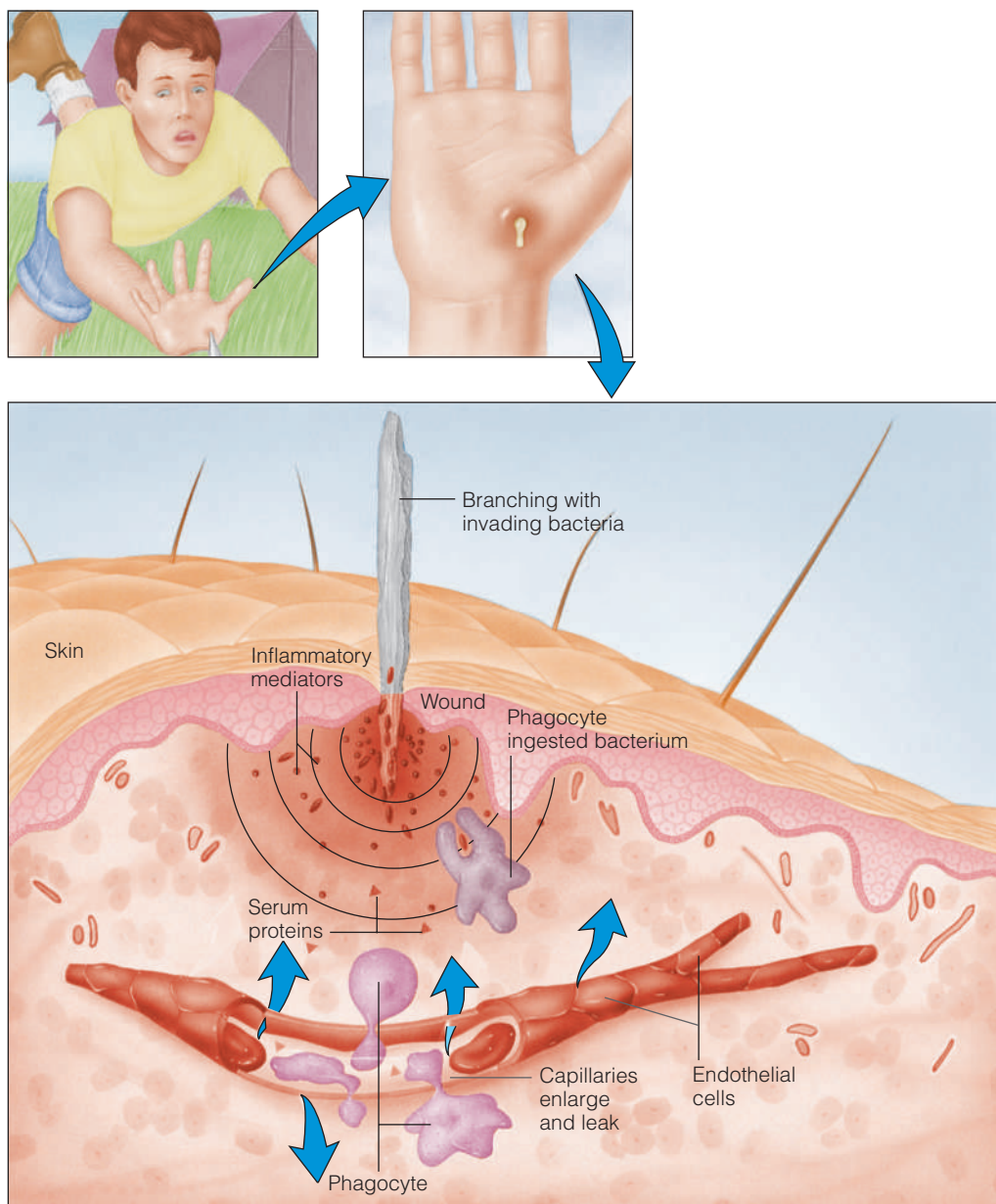


FIGURE 6.2 Acute inflammation is initiated by a stimulus such as injury or infection. Inflammatory mediators, produced at the site of the stimulus, cause blood vessels to dilate and increase their permeability; they also attract phagocytes to the site of inflammation and activate them.

Source: *Introduction to microbiology* (p. 386), by J. L. Ingraham & C. A. Ingraham. From INGRAHAM/INGRAHAM, *Introduction to Microbiology*, 1E. © 1995 Cengage Learning.

that produce similar symptoms, such as the common cold, may be caused by many different viruses. Therefore, immunity for colds would require many vaccinations, and such a process has not yet proven practical.

Immune System Disorders

Immune deficiency, an inadequate immune response, may occur for several reasons. For example, it is a side effect of most chemotherapy drugs used to treat cancer.

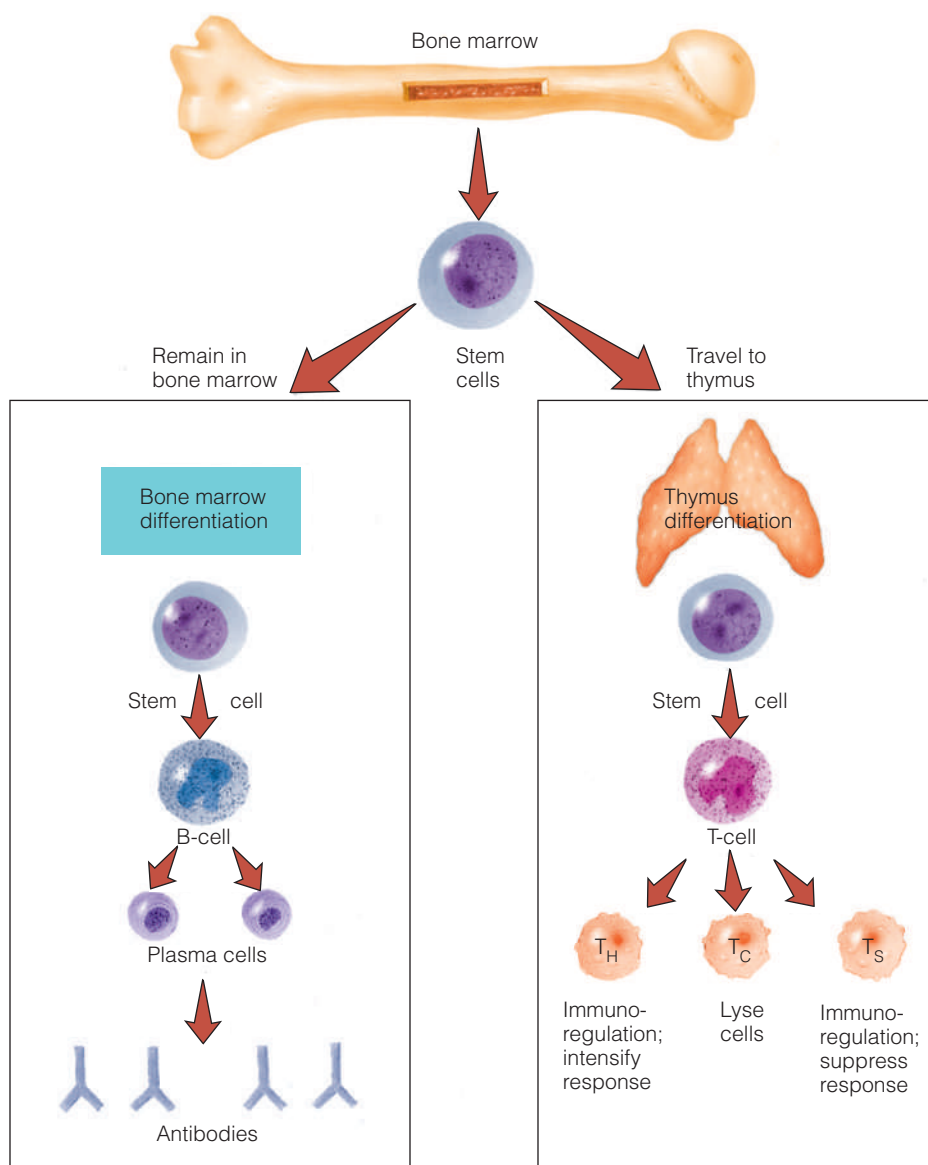


FIGURE 6.3 Origins of B-cells and T-cells.

Source: *Introduction to microbiology* (p. 406), by J. L. Ingraham & C. A. Ingraham. From INGRAHAM/INGRAHAM, *Introduction to Microbiology*, 1E. © 1995 Cengage Learning.

Immune deficiency also occurs naturally. Although the immune system is not fully functional at birth, infants are protected by antibodies they receive from their mothers through the placenta, and infants who breastfeed receive antibodies from their mothers' milk. These antibodies offer protection until the infant's own immune system develops during the first months of life.

In rare cases, the immune system fails to develop, leaving the child without immune protection.

Physicians can try to boost immune function, but the well-publicized “children in plastic bubbles” still possess immune deficiency. Exposure to any virus or bacterium can be fatal to these children. They are sealed into sterile quarters to isolate them from the microorganisms that are part of the normal world.

A much more common type of immune deficiency is **acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)**. This disease is caused by a virus, the human

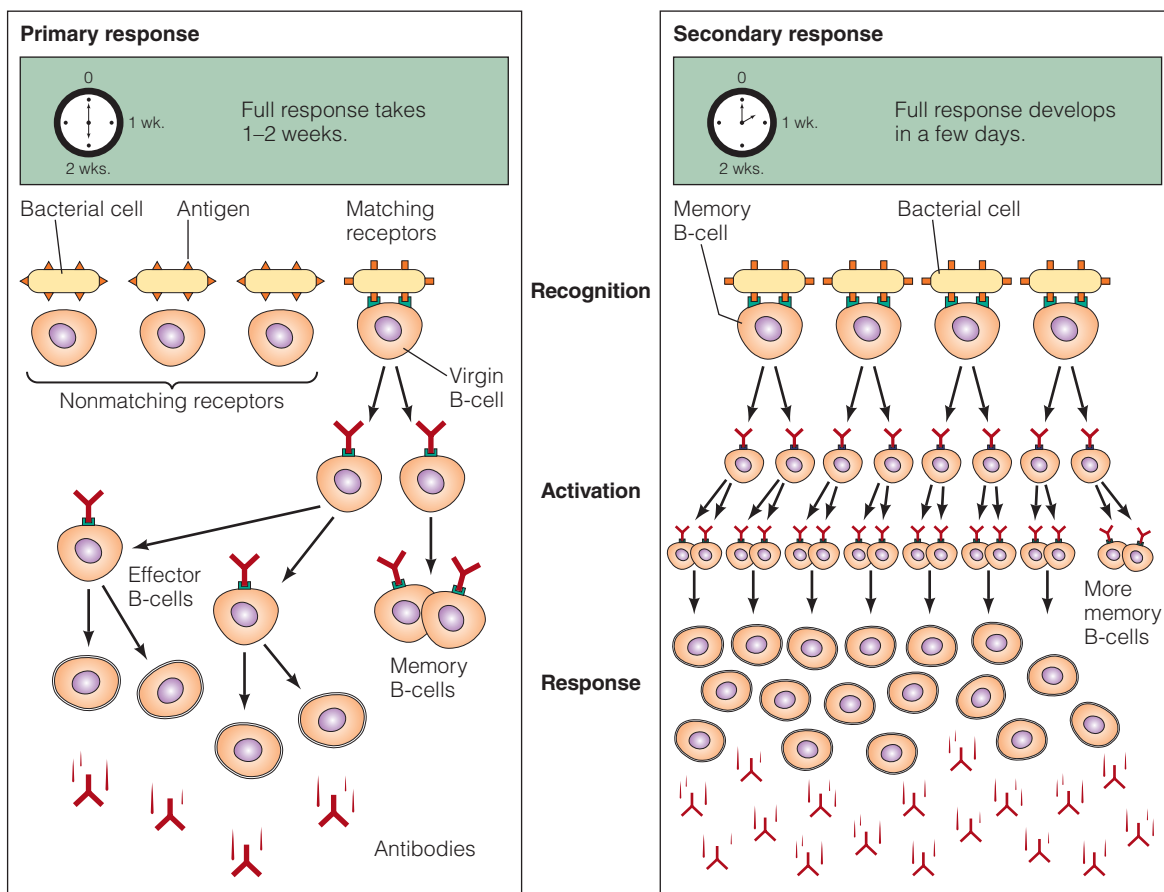


FIGURE 6.4 Primary and secondary immune pathways.

Source: *Introduction to microbiology* (p. 414), by J. L. Ingraham & C. A. Ingraham. From INGRAHAM/INGRAHAM, *Introduction to Microbiology*, 1E. © 1995 Cengage Learning.

immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which destroys the T-cells and macrophages in the immune system. People infected with HIV may progress to AIDS and become vulnerable to a wide range of bacterial, viral, and malignant diseases. HIV is contagious but not easily transmitted from person to person. The highest concentrations of the virus are found in blood and in semen. Blood transfusions from an infected person, injection with a contaminated needle, sexual intercourse, and transmission during the birth process are the most common routes of infection. Treatment consists of controlling the proliferation of the virus through antiviral drugs and management of the diseases that develop because of immune deficiency. As of 2016, a combination of antiviral drugs can slow the progress of HIV infection, but no treatment is yet capable of eliminating HIV from an infected person.

Allergies are another immune system disorder. An allergic response is an abnormal reaction to a foreign

substance that normally elicits little or no immune reaction. A wide range of substances can cause allergic reactions, and the severity of the reactions also varies widely. Some allergic reactions may be life-threatening, whereas others may cause annoyances such as runny noses. Some allergies are treated by introducing regular, small doses of the allergen to desensitize the person and to diminish or alleviate the allergic response. Sometimes, for reasons not well understood, the immune system may attack its own body. This situation occurs with **autoimmune diseases**. Recall that one function of the immune system is to recognize foreign invaders and mark them for destruction. In autoimmune diseases, the immune system loses the ability to distinguish the body from an invader, and it mounts the same vicious attack against itself that it would against an intruder. Lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis are autoimmune diseases.

IN SUMMARY

If stress can cause disease directly, it can do so only by affecting biological processes (see Figure 1.4). One likely candidate for this interaction is the immune system, which is made up of tissues, organs, and processes that protect the body from invasion by foreign material such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi. The immune system also protects the body by eliminating damaged cells. Immune system responses can be either nonspecific or specific. The nonspecific response can attack any invader, whereas specific responses attack one specific invader. Immune system problems can stem from several sources, including organ transplants, allergies, drugs used for cancer chemotherapy, and immune deficiency. The HIV damages the immune system, creating a deficiency leaving the person vulnerable to a variety of infectious and malignant diseases.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Trace the immune system defenses that a foreign invader such as a virus, bacteria, or fungus would need to bypass to successfully infect a host.

6-2 Psychoneuroimmunology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 6-4** Understand the aims of the field of psychoneuroimmunology, as well as some of the common methods used in psychoneuroimmunology research
- 6-5** Recognize the three major routes by which stress can influence the functioning of the immune system

The previous section described the function of the immune system and its tissues, structure, and disorders. Physiologists have traditionally taken a similar approach, studying the immune system as separate from and independent of other body systems. About 30 years ago, however, accumulating evidence suggested that the immune system interacts with the central nervous

system (CNS) and the endocrine system. This evidence shows that psychological and social factors can affect the CNS, the endocrine system, and the immune system. In addition, the immune system can, in turn, affect the nervous system, providing the potential for the immune system to alter behavior and thought (Maier, 2003). This recognition led to the founding and rapid growth of the field of **psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)**, a multidisciplinary field that focuses on the interactions among behavior, the nervous system, the endocrine system, and the immune system.

History of Psychoneuroimmunology

In the early 1900s, Ivan Pavlov discovered that dogs could be trained to salivate at the sound of a bell. Pavlov showed that, through the process of classical conditioning, environmental events could become automatic triggers of basic physiological processes. Could classical conditioning also influence the functioning of physiological processes as seemingly “invisible” as the immune system?

In 1975, Robert Ader and Nicholas Cohen published a study that investigated this simple question. In doing so, Ader and Cohen showed how the nervous system, the immune system, and behavior could interact—a discovery that essentially created the field of PNI. Ader and Cohen’s approach was straightforward and much like Pavlov’s approach: They paired a conditioned stimulus (CS) with an unconditioned stimulus (UCS) to see whether the conditioned stimulus alone would later produce a conditioned response (CR). However, the difference was that Ader and Cohen’s conditioned stimulus was a saccharin and water solution that rats drank, and the unconditioned stimulus was the administration of a drug that suppresses the immune system. During the conditioning process, the rats were allowed to drink the saccharin solution and then were injected with the immunosuppressive drug. Much like Pavlov’s dogs, the rats quickly associated the two stimuli, such that the rats later showed immune suppression when they were given *only* the saccharine solution. In this groundbreaking study, Ader and Cohen demonstrated that the immune system was subject to the same type of associative learning as other body systems.

Until Ader and Cohen’s 1975 report, most physiologists believed that the immune system and the nervous system did not interact, and their results were not immediately accepted (Fleshner & Laudenslager, 2004).

After many replications of their findings, physiologists now accept that the immune system and other body systems exchange information in a variety of ways. One mechanism is through **cytokines**, chemical messengers secreted by cells in the immune system (Blalock & Smith, 2007; Maier & Watkins, 2003). One type of cytokine is known as **proinflammatory cytokine** because it promotes inflammation. These cytokines, which include several types of *interleukins*, may underlie a number of states, including feelings associated with sickness, depression, and social withdrawal (Eisenberger et al., 2010; Irwin, 2008; Kelley et al., 2003). This is one example of how the functioning of the immune system may influence psychological states.

The developing knowledge of the connections between the immune and nervous systems spurred researchers to explore the physical mechanisms by which interactions occur. Psychologists began using measures of immune function to test the effects of behavior on the immune system. During the 1980s, the AIDS epidemic focused public attention and research funding on how behavior influences the immune system and therefore health. As a result of this attention, some of the clearest evidence of the role of psychological

factors in immune functioning comes from studies of people coping with HIV infection (Chida & Vedhara, 2009). However, researchers in the field of psychoneuroimmunology use a variety of populations and methods to examine the links between psychological factors and the functioning of the immune system (see Would You Believe . . .? box).

Research in Psychoneuroimmunology

Research in psychoneuroimmunology aims to develop an understanding of the role of behavior in changes in the immune system and the development of disease. To reach this goal, researchers must establish a connection between psychological factors and changes in immune function and demonstrate a relationship between this impaired immune function and changes in health status. Ideally, research should include all three components—psychological factors such as stress, immune system malfunction, and disease development—to establish the connection between stress and disease (Forlenza & Baum, 2004). This task is difficult for several reasons.

Would You BELIEVE...?

Pictures of Disease Are Enough to Activate the Immune System

The immune system's ability to mount an effective attack against a biological invader is amazing in both its complexity and effectiveness. However, the immune system may have evolved to respond to more than simply pathogens that already entered the body. The immune system may mount defenses against pathogens that the brain *anticipates may soon enter the body*.

Canadian researchers (Schaller et al., 2010) presented a series of photographs to college student participants. Some participants saw pictures of infectious diseases—such as pox, skin lesions, and sneezing. These pictures were stimuli that were expected to activate an immune response. Participants in a control group saw

pictures of guns, which were threatening stimuli but were not expected to activate an immune response. Indeed, participants who viewed the pictures of infectious diseases produced significantly more proinflammatory cytokines than participants who viewed the pictures of guns.

An Australian research team (Stevenson et al., 2011) found similar results when they had participants view images intended to induce a feeling of disgust, such as a dead animal, dirty toilet, and a cockroach on a pizza. Compared with participants who viewed neutral or threatening (but not disgusting) images, participants viewing the disgusting images produced greater quantities of the proinflammatory cytokine TNF- α .

Why might such disgusting images stimulate the immune system? While the exact reason is unknown, some researchers suggest the responses may be rooted in evolution. Organisms that mount an immune response when exposed to stimuli that are associated with pathogens may have less likelihood of succumbing to infection when those pathogens eventually enter the body (Schaller et al., 2010). However, such responses may be ineffectual—or even costly—in contexts where disgusting stimuli are not typically followed by exposure to pathogens, for example, when watching a particularly gory horror film. Taken together, these findings highlight the fascinating links between the brain and the immune system.

One reason for the difficulty is the less-than-perfect relationship between immune system malfunction and disease. Not all people with impaired immune systems become ill (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004). Disease is a function of both the immune system's competence and the person's exposure to pathogens, the agents that produce illness. The best approach in PNI comes from longitudinal studies that follow people for a period of time after they (1) experience stress that (2) prompts a decline in immunocompetence and then (3) assess changes in their health status. Few studies included all three components, and most such studies are restricted to nonhuman animals. However, one such study followed older adults who were responsible for providing care to a spouse with dementia (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1991). Compared to non-caregiving controls, the caregivers showed poorer functioning in several measures of immune status. Furthermore, the caregivers reported more days of infectious illness. The poorer immune functioning was particularly apparent in the caregivers, who had low levels of social support.

Most research in PNI focuses on the relationship between various stressors and altered immune system function. Most studies measure the immune system's function by testing blood samples rather than by testing immune function in people's bodies (Coe & Laudenslager, 2007; Segerstrom & Miller, 2004). Some research concentrates on the relationship between altered immune system function and the development of disease or spread of cancer (Cohen, 2005; Reiche, Nunes, & Morimoto, 2004), but such studies are in the minority. Furthermore, stressor types, the species of animals, and the immune system function facet studied vary, resulting in a variety of findings (Forlenza & Baum, 2004).

Some researchers manipulate short-term stressors such as electric shock, loud noises, or complex cognitive tasks in a laboratory situation; others use naturally occurring stress in people's lives to test the effect of stress on immune system function. Laboratory studies allow researchers to investigate the physical changes that accompany stress, and such studies show correlations between sympathetic nervous system activation and immune responses (Glaser, 2005; Irwin, 2008). This research suggests that sympathetic activation may be a pathway through which stress can affect the immune system. The effect is initially positive, mobilizing resources, but continued stress activates damaging physiological processes.

The naturally occurring stress of medical school exams provides another opportunity to study the

relationship between stress and immune function in students (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1994). A series of studies showed differences in immunocompetence, measured by numbers of natural killer cells, percentages of T-cells, and percentages of total lymphocytes. Indeed, medical students show more symptoms of infectious disease immediately before and after exams. More recent research (Chandrashekhara et al., 2007) confirms that anxious students taking exams experience a lowering of immune function, which demonstrates that the effect on immune function is specific to the situation and to the students' psychological state.

Exam stress is typically a short-term stress; chronic stress has even more severe effects on immune competence. Relationship conflict predicts immune system suppression for couples that experience marital conflict (Kiecolt-Glaser & Newton, 2001). Indeed, marriage is important in immune function and to a wide range of health outcomes (Graham, Christian, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2006). For example, effects of marital conflict may include poorer responses to immunization and slower wound-healing times (Ebrect et al., 2004), and a lack of partner support may play a role in increased stress during pregnancy, which raises health risks (Coussons-Read, Okun, & Nettles, 2007). However, marital conflict may not always lead to poorer immune response. Partners dealing with conflict with productive communication patterns have immune responses less dysregulated by episodes of marital conflict (Graham et al., 2009).

Other chronic stressors also suppress immune function. For example, people who are caregivers for someone with Alzheimer's disease experience chronic stress (see Chapter 11 for more about the disease and the stress of caregiving). Alzheimer's caregivers experience poorer psychological and physical health, longer healing times for wounds, and lowered immune function (Damjanovic et al., 2007; Kiecolt-Glaser, 1999; Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 1995). Furthermore, the death of an Alzheimer's patient fails to improve the stressed caregivers' psychological health or immune system functioning (Robinson-Whelen et al., 2001). Both caregivers and former caregivers were more depressed and showed lowered immune system functioning, suggesting that this stress continues even after the caregiving is over.

The results of meta-analyses of 30 years of studies on stress and immunity (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004) show a clear relationship between stress and decreased immune function, especially for chronic sources of stress. The stressors that exert the most chronic effects have the most global influence on the immune system.

Refugees, the unemployed, taxi drivers, and those who live in high-crime neighborhoods experience the type of chronic, uncontrollable stress that has the most widespread negative effect on the immune system. Short-term stress may produce adaptive changes, such as mobilizing hormone production; but chronic stress exerts effects on many types of immune system response that weaken immune system effectiveness.

Some of the PNI research that most clearly demonstrates the three-way link among stress, immune function, and disease uses stressed rats as subjects, injecting material that provokes an immune system response and observing the resulting changes in immune function and disease (Bowers et al., 2008). Some research with human participants also demonstrates the link among stress, immune function, and disease (Cohen, 2005; Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2002). For example, healing time after receiving a standardized wound varies, depending on whether the wound occurs during vacation or during exams. Students under exam stress show a decline in a specific immune function related to wound healing; the same students took 40% longer to heal during exams than they did during vacation. Thus, both human and animal research demonstrate that stress can affect immune function and disease processes.

If behavioral and social factors can decrease immune system function, is it possible to *boost* immunocompetence through changes in behavior? Would such an increase enhance health? Researchers have designed interventions aimed at increasing the effectiveness of the immune system—such as hypnosis, relaxation, stress management, and mindfulness—but reviews of these studies (Miller & Cohen, 2001; Black & Slavich, 2016) indicate only modest effects. Similarly, a meta-analysis of cognitive behavioral interventions for HIV-positive men (Crepaz et al., 2008) showed significant effects for improvements in anxiety, stress, and depression but limited changes in immune system function. However, a 10-week cognitive behavioral stress management intervention for women under treatment for breast cancer led to some improvements in immune measures over a 6-month period (Antoni et al., 2009). Cancer treatment weakens the immune system, so even small improvements may be an advantage for these individuals.

Physical Mechanisms of Influence

How does stress influence the functioning of the immune system? The effects of stress can occur through at least three routes—through the peripheral

nervous system, through the secretion of hormones, and through behaviors that affect their immune system negatively, such as missing sleep, drinking alcohol, or smoking (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004).

The peripheral nervous system provides connections to immune system organs such as the thymus, the spleen, and the lymph nodes. The brain can also communicate with the immune system through the production of *releasing factors*, hormones that stimulate endocrine glands to secrete hormones. These hormones travel through the bloodstream and affect target organs, such as the adrenal glands. (Chapter 5 included a description of these systems and the endocrine component of the stress response.) T-cells and B-cells have receptors for the glucocorticoid stress hormones.

When the sympathetic nervous system is activated, the adrenal glands release several hormones. The adrenal medulla releases epinephrine and norepinephrine, and the adrenal cortex releases cortisol. The modulation of immunity by epinephrine and norepinephrine seems to come about through the autonomic nervous system (Dougall & Baum, 2001).

The release of cortisol from the adrenal cortex results from the release of adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) by the pituitary in the brain. Another brain structure, the hypothalamus, stimulates the pituitary to release ACTH. Elevated cortisol is associated with various physical and emotional distress conditions (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004), and it exerts an anti-inflammatory effect. Cortisol and the glucocorticoids tend to depress immune responses, phagocytosis, and macrophage activation. In fact, cortisol levels in patients admitted to hospital during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic predicted their likelihood of surviving the infection (Tan et al., 2020). After controlling for age and presence of chronic illness, these researchers found that higher cortisol levels were related to greater probability of dying from COVID-19. While it remains unclear if these findings were due to suppression of the immune system, they do show that neuroendocrine responses to stress have implications for infectious diseases. Thus, the nervous system can influence the immune system either through the sympathetic nervous system or through neuroendocrine response to stress.

Communication also occurs in the other direction; the immune system can signal the nervous system by way of cytokines, chemicals secreted by immune system cells (Irwin, 2008; Maier, 2003). Cytokines can reach the brain through several routes (Capuron & Miller, 2011). This interconnection makes possible bidirectional

interactions of immune and nervous systems and may even enable effects on behavior such as depression, fatigue, and sleep impairment, which are all common symptoms of sickness. The interrelationship between the nervous system and the immune system makes it possible for each to influence the other to produce the symptoms associated with stress and disease.

Stress may also “get under the skin” by altering health-related behaviors (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004). For example, people under stress may smoke more cigarettes, drink more alcohol, use illicit drugs, and get less sleep. As described at the start of this chapter, the highly stressful lives of taxi drivers may leave little opportunity for physical activity or proper diet. Each of these behaviors increases risk for many diseases and may influence the immune system in negative ways.

IN SUMMARY

Psychoneuroimmunology research demonstrates that various functions of the immune system respond to both short-term and long-term psychological stress. Researchers are making progress toward linking psychological factors, immune system function, and disease, but few studies have included all three elements.

Some research is successful in linking immune system changes to changes in health status; this link is necessary to complete the chain between psychological factors and disease. In addition to establishing links between psychological factors and immune system changes, researchers attempt to specify the physical mechanisms through which these changes occur. Possible mechanisms include direct connections between nervous and immune systems and an indirect connection through the neuroendocrine system. Chemical messengers called *cytokines* also allow for communication between immune and nervous system and possible effects on behavior. In addition, stress may prompt people to change their behaviors, adopting less healthy habits that are risk factors for disease.

APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

1. Create a profile of a person whose lifestyle may lead to a weakened immune system and an increased risk of infection. What aspects of their experiences and behaviors create this increase risk?

6-3 Does Stress Cause Disease?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 6-6 Understand the diathesis–stress model and how it helps explain why stress may be especially harmful for some people
- 6-7 Recognize the physical health conditions that are linked to stress and the mechanisms that link stress to these conditions
- 6-8 Understand how stress can increase people’s risk for psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder

Many factors cause disease, and stress may be one of those factors. When considering the link between stress and disease, remember that most people who experience substantial stress do *not* develop a disease. Furthermore, in contrast to other risk factors—such as having high cholesterol levels, smoking cigarettes, or drinking alcohol—the risks conferred by life events are usually temporary. However, even temporary stress affects some people more than others.

Why does stress affect some people, apparently causing them to get sick, and leave others unaffected? The diathesis–stress model offers a possible answer to this question.

The Diathesis–Stress Model

The **diathesis–stress model** suggests that some individuals are vulnerable to stress-related diseases because either genetic weakness or biochemical imbalance inherently predisposes them to those diseases. The diathesis–stress model has a long history in psychology, particularly in explaining the development of psychological disorders. During the 1960s and 1970s, the concept was used as an explanation for the development of psychophysiological disorders (Levi, 1974) as well as schizophrenic episodes, depression, and anxiety disorders (Zubin & Spring, 1977).

Applied to either psychological or physiological disorders, the diathesis–stress model holds that some people are predisposed to react maladaptively to environmental

stressors. This predisposition (diathesis) is usually thought to be inherited through biochemical or organ system weakness, but some theorists (Zubin & Spring, 1977) also consider learned patterns of thought and behavior as components of vulnerability. Whether inherited or learned, the vulnerability is relatively permanent. What varies over time is the presence of environmental stressors, which may account for the waxing and waning of illnesses.

Thus, the diathesis–stress model assumes that two factors are necessary to produce disease. First, the person must have a relatively permanent predisposition to the disease, and second, that person must experience some sort of stress. Diathetic individuals respond pathologically to the same stressful conditions with which most people can cope. For people with a strong predisposition to a disease, even a mild environmental stressor may be sufficient to produce an illness episode. For example, a study of symptom stress and depression (Schroeder, 2004) revealed that surgical patients with low coping competence were vulnerable to developing depression in the months following their surgery, whereas patients with better coping skills were less vulnerable to depression. Abuse or maltreatment during childhood may create another source of vulnerability to physical and psychological disorders. As adults, these individuals show increased vulnerability to schizophrenia (Rosenberg et al., 2007), anxiety and depression (Stein, Schork, & Gelernter, 2008), posttraumatic stress disorder (Storr et al., 2007), and infectious disease (Cohen, 2005). A person's social environment may also create a diathesis; stressful life events can increase suicide risk among adults, but especially for those who also report high levels of loneliness (Chang et al., 2010). Therefore, personal and psychosocial factors have the power to create vulnerabilities to disorders.

The diathesis–stress model may explain why life event scales (see Chapter 5) are so inconsistent in predicting illness. The number of points accumulated on the Holmes and Rahe Social Readjustment Rating Scale or the number of items checked on the Life Events Scale for Students is only a weak predictor of illness. The diathesis–stress model holds that a person's diathesis (vulnerability) must be considered along with stressful life events in predicting who will get sick and who will stay well; it allows for a great deal of individual variability in who gets sick and who stays well under conditions of stress (Marsland et al., 2001).

In this section, we review the evidence concerning the link between stress and several diseases, including headache, infectious disease, cardiovascular disease,

diabetes mellitus, premature birth, asthma, and rheumatoid arthritis. In addition, stress shows some relationship to psychological disorders such as depression and anxiety disorders.

Stress and Disease

What is the evidence linking stress to disease? Which diseases have been implicated? What physiological mechanism might mediate the connection between stress and disease?

Hans Selye's concept of stress (see Chapter 5) included suppression of the immune response, and a growing body of evidence now supports this hypothesis through interactions among the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems (Kemeny & Schedlowski, 2007). These interactions are similar to the responses hypothesized by Selye and provide strong evidence that stress could be involved in a variety of physical ailments. **Figure 6.5** shows some possible effects.

Several possibilities exist for pathways through which stress could produce disease (Segerstrom & Miller, 2004). Direct influence could occur through the effects of stress on the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems. Because any or all of these systems can create disease, sufficient physiological foundations exist to provide a link between stress and disease. In addition, indirect effects could occur through changes in health practices that increase risks; that is, stress tends to be related to increases in drinking, smoking, drug use, and sleep problems, all of which can increase the risk for disease.

Stress may also accelerate the normal aging process by shortening the length of telomeres. A **telomere** is a region of repetitive nucleotide sequences appearing at each end of a chromosome. Telomeres serve as a protective cap that prevents a chromosome from deterioration, much in the same way that the tip of a shoelace prevents it from fraying apart. Each time a cell divides and a chromosome replicates, however, the length of the telomere shortens. When telomeres shorten to a certain point, affected cells undergo senescence; that is, they lose the ability to replicate normally. Senescence is a normal part of the aging process; for this reason, telomere length can be a useful measure of cellular aging.

Importantly, recent research shows that the experience of life stress—both early life stress as well as recent chronic stress—is associated with accelerated shortening of telomeres (Mathur et al., 2016; Verhoeven, van Oppen et al., 2015). Long working hours, lower socioeconomic status, and childhood trauma all have

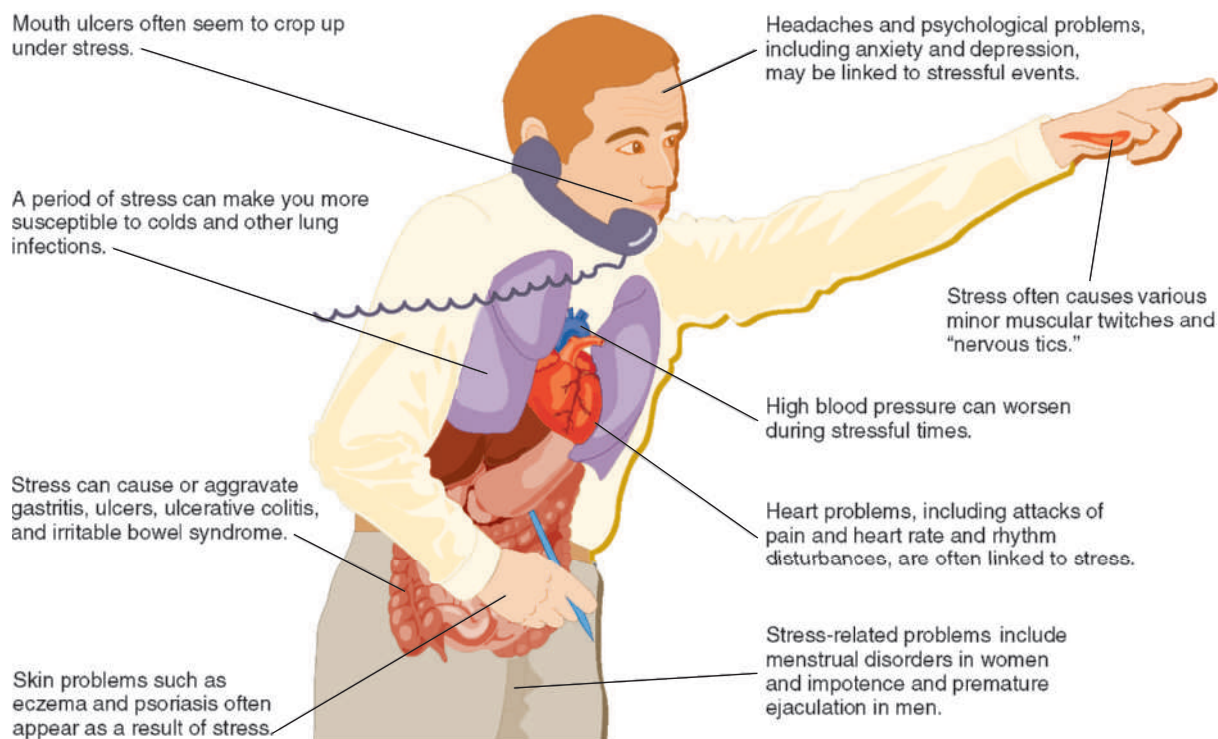


FIGURE 6.5 Effects of long-term stress.

Source: *An invitation to health* (7th ed., p. 58), by D. Hales, 1997, Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. From HALES, *Invitation to Health*, 7E. © 1997 Cengage Learning.

been linked to shorter telomere length. In one study of healthy mothers, those who reported the highest levels of stress had shorter telomeres than those with the lowest levels of stress, a difference corresponding to what would be expected from 10 years of normal aging (Epel et al., 2004)! Longitudinal research shows that other psychological states such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD predict shortened telomere length over time (Shalev et al., 2014). Even having ambivalent social relationships—that is, having many social relationships that you feel are neither particularly positive nor negative—is associated with shorter telomeres, particularly among women (Uchino et al., 2012).

While the exact mechanisms by which stress or other psychosocial states contribute to the shortening of telomere remains unclear, the release of glucocorticoids by the HPA axis during stress may result in oxidative damage to DNA and the shortening of telomeres (Epel et al., 2004; von Zglinicki, 2002). It is unknown at this point, however, whether the effect of stress on telomere length increases a person's chances of succumbing to specific diseases. Shortened telomeres may contribute to the susceptibility to infection (Cohen et al., 2013a);

in one study, for example, the shortened telomere length partially explained the link between low childhood socioeconomic status and adult risk of infection (Cohen et al., 2013b). Shortened telomere length has also been associated with the development of cancer (Günes & Rudolph, 2013), but life stress appears to have a small, if any, relationship to the risk of developing cancer (Chida et al., 2008; Heikkilä et al., 2013). Investigations into the potential role of stress in accelerating cellular aging remains an active area of research and highlights the multiple ways in which stress could influence disease.

Headaches. Table 6.1 summarizes the influence of stress on a number of specific health conditions, including headaches. Headaches are a common problem; more than 99% of people will experience headaches at some time in their lives (Smetana, 2000). For most people, headaches are an uncomfortable occurrence, but others experience serious, chronic pain. Headache can signal serious medical conditions, but most often the pain associated with the headache is the problem. This source of pain is a major cause of disability (D'Amico et al., 2011). The majority of people who seek medical

assistance for headaches experience the same sorts of headaches as those who do not; the difference stems from the frequency and severity of the headaches or from personal factors involved in seeking assistance.

Although more than 100 types of headaches may exist, distinguishing among them is controversial; the underlying causes for the most common types remain unclear (Andrasik, 2001). Nevertheless, diagnostic criteria have been devised for several types of headaches. The most frequent type is *tension headache*, usually associated with increased muscle tension in the head and neck region. Tension is also a factor in migraine headaches, which are believed to originate in neurons in the brain stem (Silberstein, 2004). Migraines are associated with throbbing pain localized in one side of the head.

Stress is a factor in headaches; people with either tension or vascular headaches name stress as one of the leading precipitating factors (Deniz et al., 2004; Spierings, Ranke, & Honkoop, 2001). However, a comparison of people with daily headaches and those with infrequent headaches found no difference in stress as measured either by life events or by hassles (Barton-Donovan & Blanchard, 2005), and a study comparing traumatic life events for headache patients found no difference from a comparison group (de Leeuw, Schmidt, & Carlson, 2005). The type of

stress people often associate with headaches tends not to be traumatic life events but, rather, daily hassles. Students with chronic or frequent headaches reported more hassles than did students with infrequent headaches (Bottos & Dewey, 2004).

Nash and Theborge (2006) discussed the ways through which stress might influence headaches. First, stress may be a predisposing factor that influences the development of headaches. Second, stress may act to transform a person who experiences occasional headaches into one who has chronic headaches. Third, stress may worsen headache episodes, magnifying the pain. These routes allow for several possibilities through which stress can contribute to the development of a headache and to chronic headaches. Furthermore, stress may decrease the quality of life for those with headaches.

Infectious Disease. Are people under stress more likely than nonstressed individuals to develop infectious diseases such as the common cold? Research suggests that the answer is yes. An early study (Stone, Reed, & Neale, 1987) followed married couples who kept diaries on their own and their spouse's desirable and undesirable daily life experiences. Results indicated that participants who experienced a decline in desirable events or an increase in undesirable events developed somewhat

TABLE 6.1 The Influence of Stress on Selected Health Conditions

Condition	Influence of Stress
Headaches	Stress, in particular daily hassles, can lead to occasional headaches, chronic headaches, and worsen headache pain.
Infectious Disease	Chronic stress can increase susceptibility to cold infections, weaken effects of vaccines, worsen progression of HIV, and lead to outbreaks of herpes simplex virus.
Cardiovascular Disease	Stress can trigger heart attacks and worsen progression of heart disease, by increasing inflammation and increasing artery damage.
Stress Reactivity	Stress reactivity, including stress of low socioeconomic status and racism, increases risk of cardiovascular problems.
Ulcers	Together with <i>H. pylori</i> infection, stress—including health behaviors associated with stress—can precipitate development of ulcers.
Diabetes	Stress can increase inflammation, which can lead to insulin resistance. Stress can also worsen the management of existing diabetes.
Asthma	Stress can increase inflammation, which can lead to both development of asthma and asthma attacks.
Rheumatoid arthritis	Stress increases inflammation and sensitivity to pain.
Birth Outcomes	Chronic stress during pregnancy can lead to lower birth weight.

more infectious diseases (colds or flu) three and four days later. The association was not strong, but this study was the first prospective design to show a relationship between daily life experiences and subsequent disease.

Later studies used a more direct approach, intentionally exposing healthy volunteers with cold viruses to see who would develop a cold and who would not (Cohen, 2005; Cohen et al., 1998; Cohen, Tyrrell, & Smith, 1991, 1993). The results indicated that the higher the person's stress, the more likely it was that the person would become ill.

Cohen and his colleagues (1998) also used the same inoculation procedure to see what types of stressors increase susceptibility to a cold virus. They found that the duration of a stressful life event was more important than the severity. Acute severe stress of less than one month did not lead to the development of colds, but severe chronic stress (more than one month) led to a substantial increase in colds. Later research showed that susceptibility varies from individual to individual (Marsland et al., 2002); sociable and agreeable people develop fewer colds than others after exposure to a cold virus (Cohen et al., 2003). A naturalistic study of stress and colds (Takkouche, Regueira, & Gestal-Otero, 2001) showed that high levels of stress were related to increases in infection. People in the upper 25% of perceived stress were about twice as likely as those in the lowest 25% to get a cold, which

suggests that stress may be a significant predictor of developing infectious disease.

Stress may also influence the extent to which vaccinations provide protection against infectious disease. Vaccinations, as you recall, stimulate the immune system to produce antibodies against specific viruses. Stressed people—such as caregivers—show weakened antibody production following flu vaccination compared with people under less life stress (Pedersen, Zachariae, & Bovbjerg, 2009). This relationship between stress and weakened response to vaccination is as apparent among younger adults as it is among older adults. Thus, vaccinations may be less effective in protecting against infectious disease among people experiencing stress.

Stress may also affect the progression of infectious disease. Reviews of psychosocial factors in HIV infection (Cole et al., 2001; Kopnisky, Stoff, & Rausch, 2004) explored the effect of stress on HIV infection; they concluded that stress affects both the progression of HIV infection and the infected person's immune response to antiviral drug treatment. HIV is not the only infectious disease that stresses influences. The herpes simplex virus (HSV) is transmitted through contact with the skin of an infected person and can cause blisters on the mouth, lips, or genitals. Often, these physical symptoms are not present in the infected person but only appear during periodic



Subbotina Anna/Shutterstock.com

Research has shown that stress can influence development of infectious disease.

active outbreaks of HSV. Stress predicts these symptomatic outbreaks of HSV symptoms (Chida & Mao, 2009; Strachan et al., 2011). For example, in a study of women with a sexually transmitted form of HSV, researchers found that experiences of psychosocial distress predicted the onset of genital lesions five days later (Strachan et al., 2011). Stress also plays a role in other bacterial, viral, and fungal infections, including pneumonia, hepatitis, and recurrent urinary tract infections (Levenson & Schneider, 2007). Thus, stress is a significant factor in the susceptibility, severity, and progression of infections.

Cardiovascular Disease. Cardiovascular disease (CVD) has a number of behavioral risk factors, some of which are stress-related. Chapter 9 examines these behavioral risk factors in more detail; in this section, we look only at stress as a contributor to CVD. People who have had heart attacks named stress as the cause of their disorder (Cameron et al., 2005), but the relationship is less direct than they imagine. Two lines of research relate stress to CVD: studies that evaluate stress as a precipitating factor in heart attack or stroke and studies investigating stress as a cause in the development of CVD.

Evidence for the role of stress as a precipitating factor for heart attack or stroke in people with CVD is clear; stress increases the risks. Stress can serve as a trigger for heart attacks for people with coronary heart disease (Kop, 2003; Sheps, 2007). A large cross-cultural study called the INTERHEART Study compared more than 15,000 people who had experienced a heart attack

with almost as many who had not, attempting to identify significant risk factors that held across cultures and continents (Yusuf et al., 2004). This study identified a set of psychological stressors showing a significant relationship to heart attack, including workplace and home stress, financial problems, major life events in the past year, depression, and external locus of control (Rosengren et al., 2004). These stress factors related to heart attack and made a substantial contribution to the risk within each population. The individuals who experienced heart attacks may have had long-standing CVD, but stress may also contribute to the development of this disease. However, even positive stress may create a risk for cardiovascular problems (see Would You Believe . . . ? box).

The role of stress in the development of heart disease is indirect but may occur through several routes, including both the immune and endocrine systems (Matthews, 2005). For example, job-related stress (Smith et al., 2005) and other situations with high demands and low control (Kamarck et al., 2007) are implicated in heart disease. One possible route for this effect is through the action of the immune system, which reacts by releasing cytokines, which promote inflammation. This inflammation is a factor in the development of coronary artery disease (Steptoe, Hamer, & Chida, 2007). The action of stress hormones such as the corticoids also affects the development of diseased arteries, exacerbating artery damage and making the development of arterial plaque more likely. These stress-related responses apply to any source of stress, forming an indirect route to heart disease.

Would You BELIEVE...?

Being a Sports Fan May Be a Danger to Your Health

Would you believe that being a sports fan may endanger your health? A week or so before the 2015 Super Bowl, stories appeared in the media suggesting that watching this sports event might present a risk for heart attack. This risk did not stem from the pizza, chips, and beer from Super Bowl parties, but from the emotional stress and excitement of the game.

The warnings were not based on research on the dangers of American football but, rather, on the increase in cardiovascular events during the World Cup Soccer championship held in Germany in 2006 (Wilbert-Lampen et al., 2008). Researchers compared the frequency of such cardiac events as heart attack and cardiac arrhythmia during the month of the World Cup championship with the month before

and after the playoffs and found an elevated rate during the playoffs. The incidence of such cardiac events was three times higher for men and almost twice as high for women on days when the German team played compared with days during the comparison period. The risk was greatest during the two hours after the beginning of a match, suggesting that fans truly had their “hearts in the game.”

As you'd expect, winning or losing matters. Fans of losing teams have the greater chances of being admitted to a hospital for cardiovascular problems, compared to fans of winning teams. But watching your team win a game doesn't get you

off the hook; the thrill of cheering on a victory also increases chances of cardiovascular problems (Olsen et al., 2015). Some evidence suggests that this heightened risk is attributable to stress-induced inflammatory responses (Wilbert-Lampen et al.,

2010), and the risk is greatest for people who already have cardiovascular problems. So, before sitting down to watch the next big championship game, you may want to consult with your doctor first.

Hypertension. Although high blood pressure would seem to be the result of stress, no simple relationship exists between stress and blood pressure. Situational factors such as noise can elevate blood pressure, but most studies show that blood pressure returns to normal when the situational stimulus is removed. However, a longitudinal study of blood pressure (Stewart, Janicki, & Kamarck, 2006) showed that the time to return to normal blood pressure after a psychological stressor predicted hypertension over 3 years. This response is similar to reactivity.

Reactivity. The idea that some people react more strongly to stress than others is another possibility for the link between stress and CVD. This response, called *reactivity*, may play a role in the development of CVD if the response is relatively stable within an individual

and prompted by events that occur frequently in the individual's life. Many life events can prompt stress responses that include cardiac reactions.

One study showed that reactivity relates to incidence of stroke (Everson et al., 2001). Men with higher systolic blood pressure reactivity were at greater risk for stroke than men with less blood pressure reactivity. The higher rate of CVD for African Americans than for European Americans leads researchers to examine differences in reactivity between these two ethnic groups, as well as the stressors prompting such reaction. Many African Americans experience a continuous struggle to cope with a variety of stressors that relate to their ethnicity, and this struggle constitutes the type of long-term stressor that poses health threats (Bennett et al., 2004). Beginning during childhood and continuing into adolescence, African Americans show



Jose Luis Palaez Inc./DigitalVision/Getty Images

Beginning during childhood, African Americans show higher cardiac reactivity than other ethnic groups, which may relate to their higher levels of cardiovascular disease.

greater reactivity than European Americans (Murphy et al., 1995); these differences appeared among children as young as 6 (Treiber et al., 1993). In addition, African American children with a family history of CVD showed significantly greater reactivity than any other group of children in the study. More recent research shows that some of the increased stress reactivity among African American adolescents may be due to the chronic stresses of lower socioeconomic status; some may be due to chronic stress related to ethnicity (Tackett et al., 2017).

Research on the experience of discrimination shows that racist interactions produce reactivity. A study comparing the reactions of African American and European American women (Lepore et al., 2006) showed that African American women who evaluated a stressful situation as racist showed stronger cardiac reactions than women who did not identify the stress as racist. Furthermore, a more recent review concluded that racist interactions lead to HPA activation and cortisol production as well, with similar effects for both African American and Latino/Hispanic participants (Korous, Causadias, & Casper, 2017). Thus, experiences of racial discrimination contribute to stress reactivity, and may partially explain the greater prevalence of CVD among African Americans.

Ulcers. At one time, stress was widely accepted as the cause of ulcers. During the 1980s, however, two Australian researchers, Barry Marshall and J. Robin Warren, proposed that ulcers were the result of a bacterial infection rather than stress (Okuda & Nakazawa, 2004). At the time, their hypothesis seemed unlikely because most physiologists and physicians believed that bacteria could not live in the stomach environment because of its extreme acidity. Marshall had trouble obtaining funding to research the possibility of a bacterial basis for ulcers.

With no funding for his research and the belief that he was correct, Marshall took matters into his own hands: He infected himself with the bacterium to demonstrate its gastric effects. He developed severe gastritis and took antibiotics to cure himself, providing further evidence that this bacterium has gastric effects. A clinical trial later supported Marshall's hypothesis that stomach ulcers were less likely to return in patients who received antibiotics compared with patients who received an acid suppressant (Alper, 1993). These findings demonstrated the role that bacterial infection plays in ulcer development. However,

the psychological component has not disappeared from explanations for the development and reoccurrence of ulcers because *H. pylori* infection does not seem to account for all ulcers (Levenstein, 2000; Watanabe et al., 2002). This infection is very common and related to a variety of gastric problems, yet most infected people do not develop ulcers (Weiner & Shapiro, 2001). Thus, *H. pylori* infection may create a vulnerability to ulcers, which stress or other psychosocial conditions then precipitate. For example, smoking, heavy drinking, caffeine consumption, and use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs all relate to ulcer formation. Stress may be a factor in any of these behaviors, providing an indirect link between stress and ulcer formation in infected individuals. In addition, the hormones and altered immune function associated with the experience of chronic stress may be a more direct link. Therefore, behavioral factors play a role in the development of ulcers, but so does *H. pylori* infection, creating a complex interaction of factors in the formation of ulcers.

Diabetes mellitus. Diabetes is a chronic disease with two types: type 1, or insulin-dependent, and type 2, or non-insulin-dependent. Type 1 diabetes usually begins in childhood and requires insulin injections for its control. Type 2 diabetes usually appears during adulthood and can most often be controlled by dietary changes. (The lifestyle adjustments and behavioral management required by diabetes mellitus are discussed in Chapter 11.)

Stress may contribute to the *development* of both types of diabetes. First, stress may contribute directly to the development of type 1 insulin-dependent diabetes through the disruption of the immune system, possibly during infancy (Sepa et al., 2005). Immune system measures at one year of age indicated that those infants who had experienced higher family stress showed more indications of antibodies consistent with diabetes. Second, a recent epidemiological study of over 55,000 Japanese adults showed that greater perceived stress increased the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes at a 10-year follow-up (Kato et al., 2009). Stress may contribute to the development of type 2 through its effect on cytokines that initiate an inflammatory process that affects insulin metabolism and produces insulin resistance (Black, 2003; Tsiotra & Tsigos, 2006). Third, stress may contribute to type 2 through its possible effects on obesity. Research on stress and type 2 diabetics shows that stress can be a triggering factor and thus play a role in the age at which people develop type 2 diabetes.

In addition, stress may affect the *management* of diabetes mellitus through its direct effects on blood glucose (Riazi, Pickup, & Bradley, 2004) and through the indirect route of hindering people's adherence with controlling glucose levels (Farrell et al., 2004). Indeed, adherence, discussed in Chapter 4, is a major problem for this disorder.

Asthma. Asthma is a respiratory disorder characterized by difficulty in breathing due to reversible airway obstruction, airway inflammation, and increase in airway responsiveness to a variety of stimuli (Cohn, Elias, & Chupp, 2004). The prevalence and mortality rate of asthma is increasing for both European American and African American women, men, and children, but asthma disproportionately affects poor African Americans living in urban environments (Gold & Wright, 2005).

Because inflammation is an essential part of asthma, researchers hypothesize that the proinflammatory cytokines play a fundamental (possibly a causal) role in the development of this disease (Wills-Karp, 2004). The link between stress and the immune system presents the possibility that stress plays a role in the development of this disorder, but stress is also involved in asthma attacks (Chen & Miller, 2007).

Physical stimuli such as smoke can trigger an attack, but stressors, such as emotional events and pain, can also stimulate an asthma attack (Gustafson et al., 2008). Both acute and chronic stress increase the risk of asthma attacks in children with asthma; a population-based study in South Korea (Oh et al., 2004) found that people who reported more stress were more likely to experience more severe problems with their asthma. Children living in inner-city neighborhoods with parents who have mental problems are at sharply heightened risk (Weil et al., 1999). Even in a laboratory setting, the influence of chronic stress on asthma is evident: Children of low socioeconomic status show greater asthma symptoms following an acute stress task than children of high socioeconomic status (Chen et al., 2010). Thus, stress is a significant factor in triggering asthma attacks.

Rheumatoid arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic inflammatory disease of the joints, and is believed to be an autoimmune disorder in which a person's own immune system attacks itself (Ligier & Sternberg, 2001). The attack produces inflammation and damage to the tissue lining of the joints, resulting in pain and loss of flexibility and

mobility. Stress is hypothesized to be a factor in the development of autoimmune diseases through the production of stress hormones and cytokines (Stojanovich & Marisavljevich, 2008).

Stress can make arthritis worse by increasing sensitivity to pain, reducing coping efforts, and possibly affecting the process of inflammation itself. Although it is unclear whether people with rheumatoid arthritis have different cortisol responses to stress than healthy people, there is evidence of greater immune dysregulation among arthritis patients (Davis et al., 2008; de Brouwer et al., 2010). These findings suggest a role for stress in this disease. For example, people with rheumatoid arthritis reported more pain on workdays that were stressful (Fifield et al., 2004). Other factors are important for the development of rheumatoid arthritis, but the stress that results from rheumatoid arthritis brings about negative changes in people's lives and requires extensive coping efforts.

Birth Outcomes. The stress a mother experiences during pregnancy is the topic of research for both human and nonhuman subjects (Kofman, 2002). Research with nonhuman subjects conclusively demonstrates that stressful environments relate to lower birth weight and developmental delays, and that infants of stressed mothers show higher reactivity to stress. Research with human participants cannot experimentally manipulate such stressors, so the results are not as conclusive. However, studies on stress during pregnancy reveal a tendency for stress to make preterm deliveries more likely and to result in babies with lower birth weights (Dunkel-Schetter, 2011). Both factors contribute to several problems for the infants. The importance of type and timing of stress remains unclear, but there is some indication that chronic stress may be more damaging than acute stress and that stress late in pregnancy is riskier than earlier stress.

Stress and Psychological Disorders

Stress can put people in a bad mood. For some people, these emotional responses of stress are short lived. For other people, stress may lead to persistent emotional difficulties that can qualify as psychological disorders. Therefore, the study of stress as a factor in psychological disorders parallels other research about stress and disease by adopting the diathesis–stress model. This research concentrates not only on the sources of stress

relating to psychological disorders but also on the factors that create vulnerability.

Mood changes can also lead to changes in immune function. Changes in immune functioning may underlie several psychological disorders (Dantzer et al., 2008; Harrison et al., 2002). As you will learn, the relationship between stress and psychological disorders may be mediated through processes similar to those involved in other diseases—through the immune system.

Depression. There is clear evidence that stress contributes to the development of depressive symptoms. Much of the research focusing on this relationship attempts to answer two questions. First, what factors make some people more vulnerable to depression? Second, what physical mechanisms translate stress into depression?

Ineffective coping may be one source of vulnerability to depression. People who can cope effectively are able to avoid depression, even with many stressful events in their lives. As you will recall from Chapter 5, Richard Lazarus and his colleagues (Kanner et al., 1981; Lazarus & DeLongis, 1983; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) regarded stress as the combination of an environmental stimulus with the person's appraisal, vulnerability, and perceived coping strength. According to this theory, people become ill not only because they have had too many stressful experiences but also because they evaluate these experiences as threatening or damaging, because they are physically or socially vulnerable at the

time, or because they lack the ability to cope with the stressful event.

Another proposal for vulnerability to depression is the “kindling” hypothesis (Monroe & Harkness, 2005). This view holds that major life stress provides a “kindling” experience that may prompt the development of depression. This experience then sensitizes people to depression, and future experiences of stress need not be major to prompt recurrences of depression (Stroud et al., 2011). A meta-analysis of studies on this topic (Stroud, Davila, & Moyer, 2008) showed some support, especially for the hypothesis of stress predicting first episodes of depression.

A negative outlook or the tendency to dwell on problems may exacerbate stress, making people more likely to think in ways that could increase depression (Ciesla & Roberts, 2007; Gonzalez, Nolen-Hoeksema, & Treynor, 2003). Rumination—the tendency to dwell on negative thoughts—is one factor implicated in depression. For example, a longitudinal study of Japanese university students (Ito et al., 2006) demonstrated that rumination predicted depression. Thus, the tendency to dwell on negative thoughts is one type of vulnerability for depression. Consistent with the diathesis–stress view, more positive ways of thinking or less stress would result in lower risk for depression.

Genetic vulnerability is another type of risk factor for depression. In a longitudinal study of Swedish twins (Kendler et al., 2007), stress was a significant factor in depression, but only under some circumstances.



Stress can make people more vulnerable to depression.

Stress was more likely to predict earlier compared with later episodes of depression, consistent with the kindling hypothesis. Importantly, stress was also more likely to predict depression for people with low, rather than high, genetic risk. Some of this genetic risk for depression may be due to personality trait of neuroticism, which is also heritable. Researchers are seeking to identify the specific genes that confer a risk for depression. While some studies have found that people who inherit a particular version of a gene pair that is involved with the neurotransmitter serotonin develop depression more frequently than individuals with a different version of the gene pair, particularly when exposed to stress (Caspi et al., 2003), more recent reviews have failed to confirm this finding (Border et al., 2019).

Some types of stressful situations produce greater risks for depression than other events. For example, chronic workplace stress is linked to the development of depression, especially for people with low decision-making authority (Blackmore et al., 2007), as is living in a neighborhood where crime and drug use are common (Cutrona et al., 2005). Illness is another type of stress that shows a relationship to depression. Experiencing health problems produces stress both for the sick person and for caregivers. Heart disease (Guck et al., 2001), cancer (Spiegel & Giese-Davis, 2003), AIDS (Cruess et al., 2003), and Alzheimer's disease (Dorenlot et al., 2005) are all tied to increased incidence of depression. The relationship between stress and this variety of diseases occurs through the immune system.

Depression meeting the diagnostic criteria for clinical depression (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) is also associated with immune function, with stronger relationships found among older and hospitalized patients. In addition, the more severe the depression, the greater the alteration of immune function. A meta-analysis of depression and immune function (Zorrilla et al., 2001) indicated that depression related to many facets of immune system function, including reduced T-cells and decreased activity of natural killer cells. This link between depression and reduced immune functioning is apparent among women receiving treatment for breast cancer, for whom a healthy immune system is critical in defending against infection (Sephton et al., 2009).

This link between depression and reduced immune functioning may develop when prolonged

stress disrupts regulation of the immune system through the action of proinflammatory cytokines (Robles, Glaser, & Kiecolt-Glaser, 2005). The release of proinflammatory cytokines by the immune system (Anisman et al., 2005; Dantzer et al., 2008) sends a signal to the nervous system, which may generate fatigue, feelings of listlessness, and a loss of feelings of pleasure. Cytokine production increases when people are depressed, and people undergoing treatments that increase the production of certain cytokines also experience symptoms of depression. Thus, several lines of evidence support the role of cytokines in depression. Indeed, the brain may even interpret cytokines as stressors (Anisman et al., 2005), which interact with environmental stressors to increase risk for depression.

Anxiety Disorders. Anxiety disorders include a variety of fears and phobias, often leading to avoidance behaviors. Included in this category are conditions such as panic attacks, **agoraphobia**, generalized anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and posttraumatic stress disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). This section looks at stress as a possible contributor to anxiety states.

One anxiety disorder that, by definition, is related to stress is **posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.; American Psychiatric Association, 2013) defines PTSD as “the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to one or more traumatic events” (p. 274). PTSD can also stem from experiencing threats to one's physical integrity; witnessing another person's serious injury, death, or threatened physical integrity; and learning about death of or injury to family members or friends. The traumatic events often include military combat, but sexual assault, physical attack, robbery, mugging, and other personal violent assaults can also trigger PTSD.

Symptoms of PTSD include recurrent and intrusive memories of the traumatic event, recurrent distressing dreams that replay the event, and extreme psychological and physiological distress. Events that resemble or symbolize the original traumatic event, as well as anniversaries of that event, may also trigger symptoms. People with PTSD attempt to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations about the event and to avoid any person or place that might trigger acute distress. Lifetime prevalence of PTSD in the

general population of the United States is around 10% (Kessler et al., 2012).

However, most people who experience traumatic events do not develop PTSD (McNally, 2003), and researchers have sought to identify the risk factors for PTSD. Initially, PTSD was viewed primarily as a response to combat stress. Now, many types of experiences are considered potential risks for PTSD. People who are the victims of crime (Scarpa, Haden, & Hurley, 2006), terrorist attacks (Gabriel et al., 2007), domestic violence or sexual abuse (Pimlott-Kubiak & Cortina, 2003), and natural disasters (Dewaraja & Kawamura, 2006; Norris et al., 2001) are vulnerable. Personal factors and life circumstances also show a relationship to the development of PTSD (McNally, 2003), such as prior emotional problems, but poor social support and reactions to the traumatic event are more important in predicting who will develop PTSD (Ozer et al., 2003).

The list of experiences that make people vulnerable to PTSD includes more events experienced by women than by men, and women are more likely to show symptoms of PTSD (Pimlott-Kubiak & Cortina, 2003). Hispanic Americans also seem more vulnerable to PTSD than other ethnic groups (Pole et al., 2005), which may be due both to Hispanic Americans' greater exposure to traumatic events as well as their culturally shaped beliefs about stress (Perilla et al., 2002). The disorder is not limited to adults; children and adolescents who are the victims of violence or who observe violence are at increased risk (Griffing et al., 2006). PTSD increases the risk for medical disorders; its effects on the immune system may be the underlying reason. PTSD produces long-lasting suppression of the immune system and an increase in proinflammatory cytokines (Pace & Heim, 2011).

The relationship between stress and other anxiety disorders is less clear, perhaps because of the overlap between anxiety and depression (Suls & Bunde, 2005). Disentangling symptoms of negative affect presents problems for researchers. However, a study conducted in China (Shen et al., 2003) found that people with generalized anxiety disorder reported more stressful life events than people with no psychological disorder did. Furthermore, those with anxiety disorder showed lower levels of some immune system functioning. Thus, stress may play a role in anxiety disorders, and again the route may be through an effect on the immune system.

IN SUMMARY

Much evidence points to a relationship between stress and disease, but the relationship between stressful life events or daily hassles and disease is indirect and complex. The diathesis–stress model is the major framework for understanding the relationship between stress and development of disease. The diathesis–stress model hypothesizes that without some vulnerability, stress does not produce disease; much of the research on stress and various diseases is consistent with this model. Stress plays a role in the development of several physical disorders, including headache and infectious disease. The evidence for a relationship between stress and heart disease is complex. Stress is not directly responsible for hypertension, but some individuals show higher cardiac reactivity to stress, which may contribute to the development of CVD. Experiences of discrimination are also a factor in reactivity. Stress also plays an indirect and minor role in the development of ulcers. Other diseases have a more direct relationship with stress, including diabetes, asthma, and rheumatoid arthritis, as well as some premature deliveries; the influence of stress on the immune system and the involvement of cytokines may underlie all these relationships.

Depression is related to the experience of stressful life events in people who are vulnerable, but not in others. The source of this vulnerability may be genetic, but experiences and attitudes may also contribute to increased vulnerability, especially the experience of abuse or maltreatment during childhood. PTSD, by definition, is related to stress, but most people who experience trauma do not develop this disorder. Thus, vulnerability is also a factor for the effect of stress on the development of anxiety disorders.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Often, people who experience physical health problems also experience symptoms of psychological disorders as well. How does your knowledge of the effects of stress help explain this association?



BECOMING HEALTHIER

Stress may erode people's good intentions to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Stress may underlie people's decisions to eat an unhealthy diet, smoke, drink, use drugs, miss sleep, or avoid exercise. According to Dianne Tice and her colleagues (Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001), distressed people tend to behave more impulsively. These researchers showed that when distressed, people do things oriented toward making them feel better, and some of those things are health threatening, such as eating high-fat and high-sugar snacks. Many people believe, for example,

that "comfort foods" can help improve moods when stressed, but studies show this is not the case: comfort foods are no better than other foods in improving mood (Wagner et al., 2014). Stress also allows some people to rationalize smoking (or not quit), having a few drinks, or using drugs.

Some of these indulgences may make people feel better temporarily, but others are poor choices. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is a better choice. People feel better when they eat a healthy diet, engage in physical exercise, have positive interactions with friends or family, and get

enough sleep. Indeed, these steps may be good for your immune system. Social isolation decreases immune function (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2003), but social support improves its function (Miyazaki et al., 2003), as does getting enough sleep (Lange, Dimitrov, & Born, 2011). Thus, when you are feeling a lot of stress, try to withstand the temptation to indulge in unhealthy behaviors. Instead, prepare to treat yourself with healthy indulgences, such as time with friends or family, more (rather than less) sleep, or participation in sports or other physical activity.

Questions

This chapter has addressed three basic questions:

1. How does the immune system function?

The immune system consists of tissues, organs, and processes that protect the body from invasion by foreign material such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi. The immune system marshals both a non-specific response capable of attacking any invader and specific responses tailored to specific invaders. The immune system can also be a source of problems when it is deficient (as in HIV infection) or when it is too active (as in allergies and autoimmune diseases).

2. How does the field of psychoneuroimmunology relate behavior to disease?

The field of psychoneuroimmunology relates behavior to illness by finding relationships among behavior, the central nervous system, the immune system, and the endocrine system. Psychological factors can depress immune function, and some research has linked these factors with immune

system depression and severity of physiological symptoms.

3. Does stress cause disease?

Research indicates that stress and illness are related. However, as the diathesis–stress model holds, individuals must have some vulnerability for stress to cause disease. Stress is a moderate risk factor for headache and infectious disease. The role of stress in heart disease is complex; reactivity to stress may be involved in hypertension and the development of cardiovascular disease. Most ulcers can be traced to a bacterial infection rather than stress. The experience of stress is one of the many factors that contributes to psychological and mood disorders, but the route through which stress influences the development of these disorders may also be through the immune system.

Suggested Readings

Cohen, S. (2005). Keynote presentation at the eighth International Congress of Behavioral Medicine. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 12(3),

123–131. Shelton Cohen summarizes his fascinating research on stress and vulnerability to infectious disease.

Irwin, M. R. (2008). Human psychoneuroimmunology: 20 years of discovery. *Brain, Behavior and Immunity*, 22, 129–139. This recent review of the area of psychoneuroimmunology presents an overview of the immune system and the research on the links among psychosocial factors, immune

system response, and the development of disease in humans.

Robles, T. F., Glaser, R., & Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K. (2005). Out of balance: A new look at chronic stress, depression, and immunity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14, 111–115. This short article looks at chronic stress and hypothesizes its relationship to depression through the immune system.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- | | |
|---|---|
| 7-1 Trace the route of a pain signal from receptors in the peripheral nervous system to the brain | 7-7 Understand some of the major types of pain syndromes |
| 7-2 Understand the role of neurochemicals in the perception of pain | 7-8 Identify the strengths and limitations of three methods of measuring pain: self-report, behavioral assessment, and physiological measurement |
| 7-3 Understand the current definition of pain as a biopsychosocial phenomenon | 7-9 Identify the major medical approaches for managing pain, as well as their potential risks |
| 7-4 Identify the differences between acute, chronic, and pre-chronic pain | 7-10 Identify major behavioral techniques for managing pain, and the psychological factors that each technique addresses |
| 7-5 Identify the psychological factors that can influence the perception of pain | |
| 7-6 Understand and contrast three theories of pain and how they differ in their ability to explain several "mysteries" of pain | |

CHAPTER 7

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profiles of Pain Pain and the Nervous System

- The Somatosensory System
- The Spinal Cord
- The Brain
- Neurotransmitters and Pain
- The Modulation of Pain

The Meaning of Pain

- The Definition of Pain
- The Experience of Pain

Pain Syndromes

- Headache Pain
- Arthritis Pain
- Cancer Pain
- Phantom Limb Pain

The Measurement of Pain

- Self-Reports
- Behavioral Assessments
- Physiological Measures

Managing Pain

- Medical Approaches for Managing Pain
- Behavioral Techniques for Managing Pain

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on five basic questions:

1. How does the nervous system register pain?
2. What is the meaning of pain?
3. What types of pain present the biggest problems?
4. How can pain be measured?
5. What techniques are effective for pain management?

Understanding and Managing Pain

The complex interplay between the brain and the body is no more apparent than it is in the study of pain. You might think that a life without pain would be wonderful. However, pain plays a necessary and basic role in survival; pain is the body's way of calling attention to injury.

People like Ashlyn Blocker with the rare genetic disorder called *congenital insensitivity to pain* are not able to feel pain. Because of this condition, these people must be carefully monitored. They often experience serious injuries without any awareness, such as broken bones, bitten tongues, cuts, burns, eye damage, and infections. Many people with this disorder die at a relatively young age due to health problems that could have been treated if they were only able to heed the warning signs that pain provides.

In other cases, such as with people suffering from chronic pain, pain may exist for no clear reason. In the more extreme cases of phantom limb pain, such as Christian Bagge, people experience pain in nonexistent body parts! However, for most people, pain is an unpleasant and uncomfortable experience to be avoided whenever possible. Can people's beliefs about pain—such as the construction worker's belief that he had been injured or Byron Leftwich's belief that he could play football through the pain of a broken leg—influence their experience of pain? In this chapter, we explore these many mysteries of pain. To understand these mysteries, we must first examine how the nervous system registers pain.

7-1 Pain and the Nervous System

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 7-1 Trace the route of a pain signal from receptors in the peripheral nervous system to the brain
- 7-2 Understand the role of neurochemicals in the perception of pain



Check **YOUR EXPERIENCES**

Regarding Your Most Recent Episode of Pain

Nearly everybody experiences pain, but people experience pain in many different ways. The following questions allow you to understand the role pain plays in your life. To complete the exercise, think of the most significant pain that you have experienced within the past month, or if you have chronic pain, make your ratings with that pain problem in mind.

1. How long did your pain persist? _____ hours and _____ minutes

2. If this pain is chronic, how often does it occur?

- ☐ Less than once a month
- ☐ Once a month
- ☐ Two or three times a month
- ☐ About once a week
- ☐ Two or three times a week
- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Throughout most of every day

3. What did you do to alleviate your pain? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Took a prescription drug
- ☐ Tried to relax
- ☐ Did something to distract myself from the pain
- ☐ Took an over-the-counter drug
- ☐ Tried to ignore the pain

4. Place a mark on the line below to indicate how serious your pain was.

Not at all	Unbearable
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100	

5. Place a mark on the line below to indicate how much this pain interfered with your daily routine.

Not at all	Completely disrupted
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100	

6. During your pain, what did people around you do? (Check all that apply.)

- ☐ Gave me a lot of sympathy
- ☐ Did my work for me
- ☐ Complained when I could not fulfill my normal responsibilities
- ☐ Ignored me
- ☐ Relieved me of my normal responsibilities

Completing this assessment will show you something about your own pain experience. Some of the items on this assessment are like those on some of the standardized pain scales described in “The Measurement of Pain” later in the chapter.

All sensory information, including pain, begins with sense receptors on or near the surface of the body. These receptors change physical energy—such as light, sound, heat, and pressure—into neural impulses. We can feel pain through any of our senses, but most of what we think of as pain originates as stimulation to the skin and muscles.

Neural impulses that originate in the skin and muscles are part of the peripheral nervous system (PNS). You will recall from Chapter 5 that all neurons outside

the brain and spinal cord (the central nervous system, or CNS) are part of the PNS. Neural impulses originating in the PNS travel toward the spinal cord and the brain. Therefore, it is possible to trace the path of neural impulses from the receptors to the brain. Tracing this path is a way to understand the physiology of pain. As you will learn, the nervous system has complex systems that allow not only for the perception of pain, but also for its modulation.



Real-World Profile of PAIN



In 1995, a 29-year-old construction worker accidentally jumped down onto a 6-inch nail. He went to an emergency room, where doctors could see that his foot must have been badly injured. The nail pierced through the entirety of his work boot, up through the sole and emerging out the top. The man was in pain. The doctors had to sedate the man with the powerful opiate painkiller fentanyl before they could remove his shoe to investigate the extent of his injury.

In 2000, the parents of eight-month-old Ashlyn Blocker took her to a specialist to treat a severely irritated, bloodshot eye. Up to that point, Ashlyn was described as a “good baby,” never seeming to fuss when she was hungry or had a bad case of diaper rash. When the specialist put drops into Ashlyn’s eyes that would cause discomfort to any other infant, Ashlyn still showed no signs of pain at all.

In 2002, Byron Leftwich—the quarterback for Marshall University’s football team—suffered a leg injury that forced him off the field and into a hospital for an x-ray. When he returned to the stadium, his team was down 27–10 in the third quarter. Instead of sitting on the sidelines, he insisted on going back into the game.

In 2005, Christian Bagge was a 23-year-old American soldier serving in Iraq. One day his unit was hit by two bombs, and his legs were severely injured. Despite receiving medical treatment for his injuries, he still feels pain in his legs to this day, as if “someone is smashing my toes with a hammer.”

These four cases show the diversity in people’s experiences of pain. Injuries that may seem excruciating to some people may go unnoticed by others, or injuries that seem minor to some are debilitating to others. Some forms of pain may persist for years after an injury has healed. However, these four people also illustrate several mysteries of pain.

In the first example, when doctors were finally able to remove the construction worker’s shoe, they were shocked to see that the nail did not pierce the man’s foot at all, but that it had passed through a gap between his toes. When the man saw that his foot was unharmed, his pain disappeared. Why did he feel pain despite there being no injury?

After Ashlyn Blocker’s visit to the eye specialist, doctors noticed that something was indeed wrong with her. Not only did she have a massive abrasion on the surface of her eye, but she also had congenital insensitivity to pain with anhidrosis (CIPA), a rare genetic disorder that made her unable to experience pain. Due to this condition, she suffered multiple injuries throughout her childhood, such as major burns from placing her hands on hot exhaust pipes or into pots of boiling water. These accidents occurred simply because she could not feel the pain that would have caused anyone else to remove themselves from such dangers.

Byron Leftwich’s x-ray showed a broken left tibia, and he was in pain when he asked to return to the game. The pain was so severe that he could barely walk; his teammates had to carry him up and down the field in between plays. Yet, he finished the game with an extraordinary performance, passing the football over 300 yards. How was he able to play the game while in such pain?

For the soldier Christian Bagge, his injuries healed but the pain from his legs continue, despite that fact that he no longer has them. His legs were amputated, and the pain he experiences is one of the most mysterious forms of pain, phantom limb pain.

The Somatosensory System

The **somatosensory system** conveys sensory information from the body to the brain. All the PNS neurons from the skin’s surface and muscles are part of the

somatic nervous system. For example, a neural impulse originating in the right index finger travels through the somatic nervous system to the spinal cord. The interpretation of this information in the brain results in a

person's perception of sensations about their body and its movements. The somatosensory system consists of several senses, including touch, light/deep pressure, cold, warmth, tickling, movement, and body position.

Afferent Neurons. Afferent neurons are one of three types of neurons—*afferent*, *efferent*, and *interneurons*. **Afferent** (sensory) **neurons** relay information from the sense organs toward the brain. **Efferent** (motor) **neurons** result in the movement of muscles or the stimulation of organs or glands; **interneurons** connect sensory to motor neurons. The sense organs contain afferent neurons, called **primary afferents**, with specialized receptors that convert physical energy into neural impulses, which travel to the spinal cord and then to the brain, where that information is processed and interpreted.

Involvement in Pain. **Nociception** refers to the stimulation of sensory nerve cells that may lead to the perception of pain. The skin is the largest of the sense organs, and receptors in the skin and organs—called **nociceptors**—can respond to various types of stimulation that may cause tissue damage, such as heat, cold, crushing, cutting, and burning.

Some neurons that convey sensory information (including nociception) are covered with **myelin**, an insulating fatty substance. Myelinated afferent neurons, called **A fibers**, conduct neural impulses faster than unmyelinated **C fibers** do. In addition, neurons differ in size; larger ones conduct impulses faster than smaller ones. Two types of A fibers are important in pain perception: the large **A-beta fibers** and the smaller **A-delta fibers**. The large, myelinated A-beta fibers conduct impulses more than 100 times faster than small, unmyelinated C fibers (Melzack, 1973). C fibers are much more common; more than 60% of all sensory afferents are C fibers (Melzack & Wall, 1982). A-beta fibers fire with little stimulation, whereas C fibers require more stimulation to fire. Thus, these different types of fibers respond to different stimulation (Slugg, Meyer, & Campbell, 2000). Accordingly, these different fibers result in different pain sensations. For example, stimulation of A-delta fibers produces “fast” pain that is sharp or pricking, whereas stimulation of C fibers often results in a slower developing sensation of burning or dull aching (Chapman, Nakamura, & Flores, 1999).

The Spinal Cord

The spinal cord, which is protected by the vertebrae, is the avenue through which sensory information travels

toward the brain and motor information comes from the brain. The spinal cord also produces the spinal reflexes. Any damage to the spinal cord may interrupt the flow of sensory information, motor messages, or both, creating permanent impairment but leaving spinal reflexes intact. However, the spinal cord's most important role is providing a pathway for ascending sensory information and descending motor messages.

The afferent fibers group together after leaving the skin; this grouping forms a *nerve*. Nerves may be entirely afferent, entirely efferent, or a mixture of both. Just outside the spinal cord, each nerve bundle divides into two branches (see **Figure 7.1**). The sensory tracts, which funnel information toward the brain, enter the dorsal (toward the back) side of the spinal cord. The motor tracts, which come from the brain, exit the ventral (toward the stomach) side of the cord. On each side of the spinal cord, the dorsal root swells into a dorsal root ganglion, which contains the cell bodies of the primary afferent neurons. The neuron fibers extend into the spinal cord's **dorsal horns**.

The dorsal horns contain several layers, or **laminae**. In general, the larger fibers penetrate more deeply into the laminae than the smaller fibers do (Melzack & Wall, 1982). The cells in lamina 1 and especially those in lamina 2 receive information from the small A-delta and C fibers; these two laminae form the **substantia gelatinosa**. In their gate control theory of pain, described later in this chapter, Ronald Melzack and Peter Wall (1965) hypothesized that the substantia gelatinosa modulates sensory input information, and subsequent research shows that they were correct (Chapman et al., 1999). Other laminae also receive projections from A and C fibers, as well as fibers descending from the brain and fibers from other laminae. These connections allow for elaborate interactions between sensory input from the body and the central processing of neural information in the brain.

The Brain

The **thalamus** receives information from afferent neurons in the spinal cord. After making connections in the thalamus, the information travels to other parts of the brain, including the **somatosensory cortex**, which is located in the cerebral cortex. The primary somatosensory cortex receives information from the thalamus that allows the entire surface of the skin to be mapped onto the somatosensory cortex. However, not all areas of the skin are equally represented. **Figure 7.2** shows

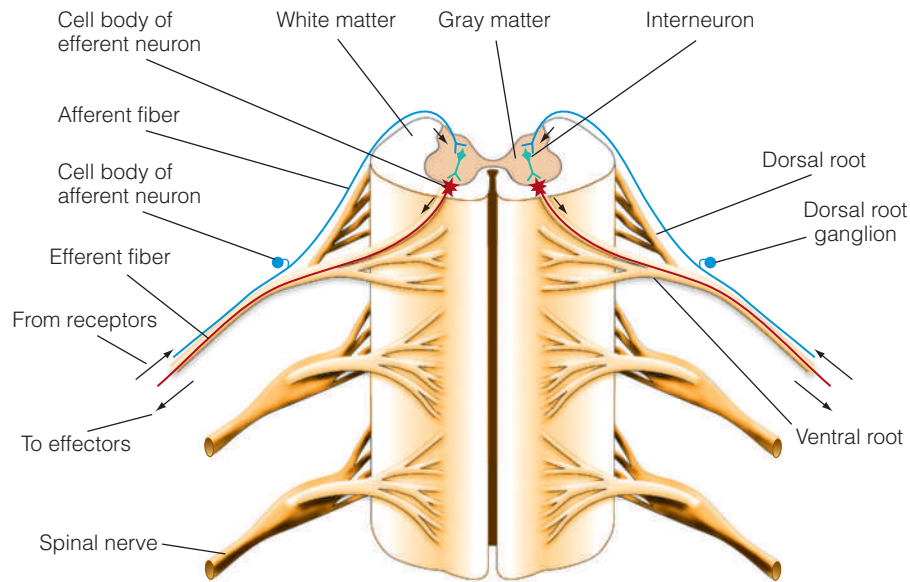


FIGURE 7.1 Cross-section through the spinal cord.

Source: *Human physiology: From cells to systems* (4th ed.), by L. Sherwood, 2001, p. 164. From SHERWOOD, *Human Physiology*, 4E. © 2001 Cengage Learning.

the area of the primary somatosensory cortex allotted to various body regions. Areas that are particularly rich in receptors occupy more of the somatosensory cortex than those areas that are poorer in receptors. For example, even though the back has more skin, the hands have more receptors, and therefore more area of the brain is devoted to interpreting the information from receptors in the hand. This abundance of receptors also means that the hands are more sensitive; hands are capable of sensing stimuli that the back cannot.

A person's ability to localize pain on the skin's surface is more precise than it is for internal organs. Internal stimulation can also give rise to sensations, including pain, but the brain does not map the viscera in the same way that it maps the skin, so localizing internal sensation is much less precise. Intense stimulation of internal organs can result in the spread of neural stimulation to the pathways serving skin senses, creating the perception of visceral pain as originating on the skin's surface. This type of pain, when it is experienced in a part of the body other than the site where the pain stimulus originates, is called **referred pain**. For example, a person who feels pain in the upper arm may not associate this sensation with the heart, even though a heart attack can cause this kind of pain.

The development of positron emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) allows researchers to study what happens in the brain when people experience pain. These

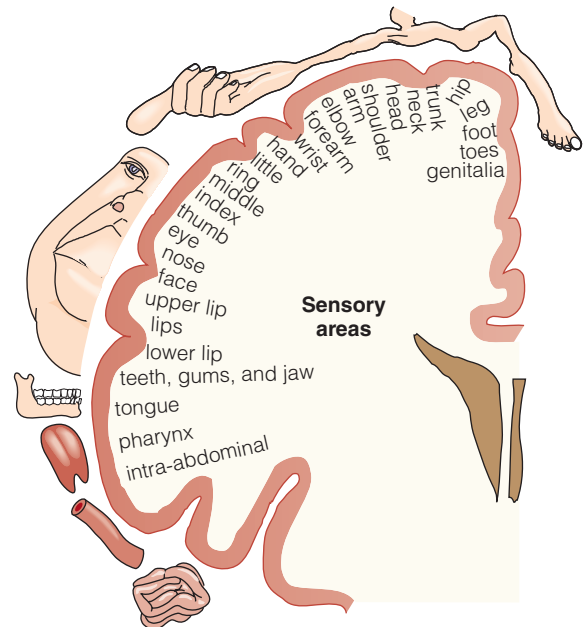


FIGURE 7.2 Somatosensory areas of the cortex.

techniques confirm that brain activity occurs when nociceptors are activated, but they paint a complex picture of how pain activates the brain (Apkarian et al., 2005). Studies of brain responses to specific pain stimuli show activation in not only many areas of the brain, including the primary and secondary somatosensory cortices, but also the anterior cingulate cortex, the thalamus, and even the cerebellum in the lower part of the brain (Buffington, Hanlon, & McKeown, 2005; Davis, 2000). Adding to the complexity, an emotional reaction usually accompanies the experience of pain, and brain-imaging studies indicate activation in areas of the brain associated with emotion when people experience pain (Eisenberger, Gable, & Lieberman, 2007; see Would You Believe . . . ? box). Thus, brain-imaging studies using PET and fMRI do

not reveal a “pain center” in the brain. Rather, these studies show that the experience of pain produces a variety of activation in the brain, ranging from the lower brain to several centers in the forebrain.

Neurotransmitters and Pain

Neurotransmitters are chemicals that are synthesized and stored in neurons. The electrical action potential causes the release of neurotransmitters from neurons, which carries neural impulses across the *synaptic cleft*, which is the space between neurons. After flowing across the synaptic cleft, neurotransmitters act on other neurons by occupying specialized receptor sites. Each fits a specialized receptor site in the same way that a key fits into a lock; without the proper fit, the

Would You BELIEVE...?

Emotional and Physical Pain Are Mainly the Same in the Brain

Social rejection is painful. People use phrases such as “emotionally scarred,” “slap in the face,” “deeply hurt,” or “crushed” to describe experiences of social rejection (MacDonald & Leary, 2005). This is as true for English speakers as it is for native speakers of German, Hebrew, Armenian, Cantonese, and Inuktitut.

It may not be a coincidence that people think about social pain in a similar manner to physical pain. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging, Naomi Eisenberger and her colleagues (Eisenberger & Lieberman, 2004; Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003) examined the brain activity of people whose feelings were “hurt” and found that the human brain reacts in similar ways to emotional and physical pain. The participants in this study experienced a virtual-reality, ball-tossing game called “Cyberball” while an fMRI scanner imaged their brains. During the game, the researchers excluded the participants from continuing the game by what participants believed were decisions of two other players.

This exclusion represented social rejection, the type of situation in which people’s feelings get hurt.

Eisenberger and her colleagues (2003) found that both the anterior cingulate cortex and the right ventral prefrontal cortex became more active during the experience of social exclusion. Importantly, these two regions of the brain also become more active when people experience *physical* pain. Furthermore, the level of activation in the anterior cingulate cortex correlated with the participants’ ratings of distress. A subsequent study showed that social rejection triggers the release of endogenous opioid painkillers in the brain, just as experiences of physical pain do (Hsu et al., 2013). Thus, the experience of social exclusion affects brain activity in a way that is quite like the experience of physical pain, suggesting that the two types of pain are similar in the brain.

If social and physical pain lead to similar patterns of brain activation, could a pill that relieves physical pain also relieve social pain?

Acetaminophen—known by the brand name Tylenol—is a pain reliever that acts on the central nervous system. Nathan DeWall and colleagues (DeWall et al., 2010) examined whether acetaminophen would reduce people’s reports of social pain. These researchers randomly assigned young adults to take either acetaminophen or a placebo pill daily for three weeks. Participants who took the acetaminophen pill reported less social pain over those three weeks—such as feeling hurt by being teased—than participants who took the placebo pill! In a follow-up fMRI study, these researchers additionally showed that participants who took acetaminophen prior to being socially excluded during a game of “Cyberball” showed less activity in the anterior cingulate cortex than participants who took a placebo pill.

Thus, there may be many similarities between social pain and physical pain. Will your doctor soon be prescribing two Tylenol as a remedy for both headache *and* heartache?

neurotransmitter will not affect the neuron. Sufficient amounts of neurotransmitters prompt the formation of an action potential in the stimulated neuron. Many different neurotransmitters exist, and each one can cause an action.

In the 1970s, researchers (Pert & Snyder, 1973; Snyder, 1977) demonstrated that the neurochemistry of the brain plays a role in the perception of pain. This realization came about through an examination of how drugs affect the brain to alter pain perception. Receptors in the brain are sensitive to opiate drugs, which are painkillers such as morphine and codeine that are derived from opium in the poppy plant. This discovery explained how opiates reduce pain—these drugs fit into brain receptors, modulate neuron activity, and alter pain perception.

The discovery of opiate receptors in the brain raised another question: Why does the brain respond to the resin of the opium poppy? In general, the brain is selective about the types of molecules that it allows to enter; only substances like naturally occurring neurochemicals can enter the brain. This reasoning led to the search for and identification of naturally occurring chemicals in the brain that affect pain perception. These neurochemicals have properties much like those of the opiate drugs (Goldstein, 1976; Hughes, 1975). This discovery prompted a flurry of research that identified more opiate-like neurochemicals, including the **endorphins**, the *enkephalins*, and *dynorphin*. These neurochemicals seem to be one of the brain's mechanisms for modulating pain. Stress, suggestion, and electrical stimulation of the brain can all trigger the release of these endorphins (Turk, 2001). Thus, opiate drugs such as morphine may be effective at relieving pain because the brain contains its own system for pain relief, which the opiates stimulate.

Neurochemicals also seem to be involved in producing pain. The neurotransmitters *glutamate* and *substance P*, as well as the chemicals *bradykinin* and *prostaglandins*, sensitize or excite the neurons that relay pain messages (Sherwood, 2001). Glutamate and substance P act in the spinal cord to increase neural firings related to pain. Bradykinin and prostaglandins are substances released by tissue damage; they prolong the experience of pain by continuing to stimulate the nociceptors.

In addition, proteins produced by the immune system, *proinflammatory cytokines*, also influence pain (Watkins et al., 2007; Watkins & Maier, 2003, 2005). Infection and inflammation prompt the immune system

to release these cytokines, which signal the nervous system and produce a range of responses associated with sickness, including decreased activity, increased fatigue, and increased pain sensitivity. Indeed, these cytokines may intensify chronic pain, by sensitizing the structures in the dorsal horn of the spinal cord that modulate the sensory message from the primary afferents (Watkins et al., 2007). Thus, the action of neurotransmitters and other chemicals produced by the body is complex, with the potential to both increase and decrease the experience of pain.

The Modulation of Pain

The **periaqueductal gray**, a structure near the mid-brain's center, is involved in modulating pain. When it is stimulated, neural activity spreads downward to the spinal cord, and pain relief occurs (Goffaux et al., 2007; Sherwood, 2001). Neurons in the periaqueductal gray run down into the reticular formation and the **medulla**, a structure in the lower part of the brain that is also involved in pain perception (Fairhurst et al., 2007). These neurons descend into the spinal cord and make connections with neurons in the substantia gelatinosa. This results in the dorsal horn neurons being unable to carry pain information to the thalamus.

The inhibition of transmission also involves some familiar neurotransmitters. Endorphins in the periaqueductal gray initiate activity in this descending inhibitory system. **Figure 7.3** illustrates this type of modulation. The substantia gelatinosa contains synapses that use enkephalin as a transmitter. Indeed, neurons that contain enkephalin seem to be concentrated in the same parts of the brain that contain substance P, the transmitter that activates pain messages (McLean, Skirboll, & Pert, 1985).

These elaborate physical and chemical systems are the body's way of modulating the neural impulses of pain. The value of pain is obvious. Pain after injury is adaptive, providing a reminder of injury and discouraging activity that adds to the damage. In some situations, however, pain modulation is also adaptive. When people or other animals are fighting or fleeing, the ability to ignore pain can be an advantage. Thus, the nervous system has complex systems that allow not only for the perception but also for the modulation of pain. These systems create the potential for psychological factors to influence the experience of pain, as we will describe in the next section.

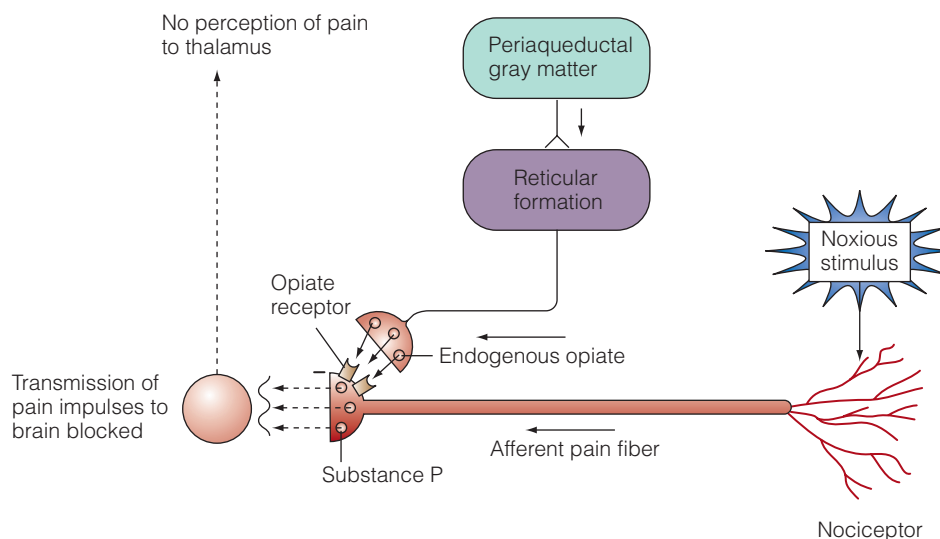


FIGURE 7.3 Descending pathways from the periaqueductal gray prompt the release of endogenous opiates (endorphins) that block the transmission of pain impulses to the brain.

Source: *Human physiology: From cells to systems* (4th ed.), by L. Sherwood, 2001, p. 181. From SHERWOOD, *Human Physiology*, 4E. © 2001 Cengage Learning.

IN SUMMARY

The activation of receptors in the skin results in neural impulses that move along afferent pathways to the spinal cord by way of the dorsal root. In the spinal cord, the afferent impulses continue to the thalamus in the brain. The primary somatosensory cortex includes a map of the skin, with more of the cortex devoted to areas of the body richer in skin receptors. The A-delta and C fibers are involved in pain, with A-delta fibers relaying pain messages quickly and C fibers sending pain messages more slowly.

The brain and spinal cord also contain mechanisms for modulating sensory input and thereby affecting the perception of pain. One mechanism is through the naturally occurring neurochemicals that relieve pain and mimic the action of opiate drugs, which exist in many places in the central and peripheral nervous systems. The second mechanism is a system of descending control through the periaqueductal gray and the medulla. This system affects the activity of the spinal cord and provides a descending modulation of activity in the spinal cord.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Classify the biological pathways, structures, and neurochemicals described in this section into those involved in creating the experience of pain and those involved in inhibiting the experience of pain.

7-2 The Meaning of Pain

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 7-3** Understand the current definition of pain as a biopsychosocial phenomenon
- 7-4** Identify the differences between acute, chronic, and pre-chronic pain
- 7-5** Identify the psychological factors that can influence the perception of pain

Until about 100 years ago, people thought that pain was a direct consequence of physical injury, and the extent of tissue damage determined the intensity of pain. Near the end of the 19th century, C. A. Strong changed this very simplistic view. Strong (1895) hypothesized

that pain was due to two factors: the sensation and the person's reaction to that sensation. In this view, psychological factors and physical causes were of equal importance. This attention to psychological factors signaled the beginning of a new definition, an altered view of the experience, and new theories of pain.

The Definition of Pain

Pain is an almost universal experience. Only those rare people with congenital insensitivity to pain escape the experience of pain. Nevertheless, pain is remarkably difficult to define. Some experts (Covington, 2000) concentrate on the physiology that underlies the perception of pain, whereas others (Wall, 2000) emphasize the subjective nature of pain. These different views reflect the multidimensional nature of pain, which the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP) has incorporated into its definition. The IASP Subcommittee on Taxonomy (1979, p. 250) defines *pain* as “an unpleasant sensory and emotional experience associated with actual or potential tissue damage, or described in terms of such damage.” By describing pain as a sensory and emotional experience, this definition highlights pain as a subjective experience. Furthermore, by describing pain as *associated* with—but not necessarily *caused* by—actual or potential tissue damage, this definition recognizes that pain can be caused by multiple factors, a view consistent with the biopsychosocial approach (Williams & Craig, 2016).

Another way to understand the meaning of pain is to view it in terms of three stages: acute, chronic, and pre-chronic (Keefe, 1982). **Acute pain** is the type of pain that most people experience when injured; it includes pains from cuts, burns, childbirth, surgery, dental work, and other injuries. Its duration is normally brief. This type of pain is ordinarily adaptive; it signals the person to avoid further injury. In contrast, **chronic pain** endures over months or even years. This type of pain may be due to a chronic condition such as rheumatoid arthritis, or it may be the result of an injury that persists beyond the time of healing (Turk & Melzack, 2001). Chronic pain frequently exists in the absence of any identifiable tissue damage. It is not adaptive but, rather, can be debilitating and demoralizing and often leads to feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Chronic pain never has a biological benefit.

Perhaps the most crucial stage of pain is the **pre-chronic pain** stage, which comes between the acute

and chronic stages. This period is critical because the person either overcomes the pain at this time or develops the feelings of fear and helplessness that can lead to chronic pain. These three stages do not exhaust all possibilities of pain. Several other types of pain exist, the most common of which is **chronic recurrent pain**, or pain marked by alternating episodes of intense pain and no pain. A common example of chronic recurrent pain is headache pain.

The Experience of Pain

The experience of pain is individual and subjective, but situational and cultural factors influence that experience. Henry Beecher, an anesthesiologist, was one of the first researchers to identify the situational influences on the experience of pain. Beecher (1946) observed soldiers wounded at the Anzio beachhead during World War II. Beecher noted that, despite their serious battle injuries, many of these men reported very little pain. What made the experience of pain different in this situation? These men were removed from the battlefield and thus from the threat of death or further injury. Under these conditions, the wounded soldiers were in a cheerful, optimistic state of mind. In contrast, civilian patients with comparable injuries experienced much more pain and requested more pain-killing drugs than the soldiers (Beecher, 1956). These findings prompted Beecher (1956) to conclude that “the intensity of suffering is largely determined by what the pain means to the patient” (p. 1609) and that “the extent of wound bears only a slight relationship, if any (often none at all), to the pain experienced” (p. 1612). Finally, Beecher (1957) described pain as a two-dimensional experience consisting of both a sensory stimulus and an emotional component. Other pain researchers came to accept Beecher's view of pain as *both* a psychological and physical phenomenon.

Battle wounds are an extreme example of sudden injury, but people who experience injuries that are more mundane also report variable amounts of pain. For example, most—but not all—people admitted to an emergency room for treatment of injury report pain (Wall, 2000). Pain is more common among people with injuries such as broken bones, sprains, and stabs than among people with injuries to the skin. Indeed, 53% of those with cuts, burns, or scrapes report that they feel no pain for at least some time after their injury, whereas only 28% of those with deep tissue

injury fail to feel immediate pain. These individual variations of pain contrast with people who have been tortured, all of whom feel pain, even though their injuries may not be as serious as those of people reporting to an emergency room. People who believe that a stimulus will be harmful experience more pain than those who have different beliefs about the situation (Arntz & Claassens, 2004; Harvie et al., 2015). The threat, intent to inflict pain, and lack of control give torture a very different meaning from unintentional injury and thus produce a different pain experience. These variations in pain perception suggest either individual differences, a cultural component for variations in pain-related behaviors, or some combination of these factors.

Individual Differences in the Experience of Pain. Individual factors and personal experience make a difference in the experience of pain. People learn to associate stimuli related to a painful experience with the pain and thus develop classically conditioned responses to the associated stimuli (Sanders, 2006). For example, many people dislike the smell of hospitals or become anxious when they hear the dentist's drill because they have had experiences associating these stimuli with pain.

Operant conditioning may also play an important role in pain by providing a means for acute pain to develop into chronic pain. Pioneering pain researcher John J. Bonica (1990) believed that being rewarded for pain behaviors is a key factor that transforms acute pain into chronic pain. According to Bonica, people who receive attention, sympathy, relief from normal responsibilities, and disability compensation for their injuries and pain behaviors are more likely to develop chronic pain than people who have similar injuries but receive fewer rewards. Consistent with Bonica's hypotheses, headache patients report more pain behaviors and greater pain intensity when their spouses or significant others respond to pain complaints with seemingly helpful responses, such as taking over chores, turning on the television, or encouraging the patient to rest (Pence et al., 2008).

Social learning may also play a role in the experience of pain. According to social learning theory, people learn behaviors through the observation of others' behaviors. In the context of pain, if a person frequently observes both others' pain as well as any rewards they gain, the person may also learn that pain results in rewards. For example, among adolescents with complaints of recurring abdominal pain, researchers found that the severity of their daily pain reports were related



Propperfoto/Getty Images

The experience of pain varies with the situation. Wounded soldiers removed from the front lines may feel little pain despite extreme injuries.

to their observations of chronic pain behaviors in their parents over the prior week (Stone et al., 2018).

Despite people's belief in a "pain-resistant" personality, no such thing exists. Some people such as Byron Leftwich endure pain to pursue a goal, but nevertheless, they perceive discomfort. Some people may display no sign of their pain because of situational factors, cultural sanctions against the display of emotion, or some combination of these two factors. For example, some Native American, African, and South Pacific Island cultures have initiation rituals that involve the silent endurance of pain. These rituals may include body piercing, cutting, tattooing, burning, or beating. To show signs of pain would result in failure, so individuals are motivated to hide their pain. Individuals may withstand these injuries with no visible sign of distress yet react with an obvious display of pain behavior to an unintentional injury in a situation outside the ritual (Wall, 2000). These variations in expressions of pain suggest cultural variations in pain behaviors rather than the existence of a pain-resistant personality.

If a pain-resistant personality does not exist, could there be evidence for a *pain-prone* personality? Research does not support the concept of a pain-prone personality either (Turk, 2001). However, people who are anxious, worried, have a negative outlook or believe they cannot cope well with pain tend to experience heightened sensitivity to pain (Peerdeman et al., 2016). Fear may be part of this negative outlook; individuals who experience a heightened fear of pain also experience more pain (Leeuw et al., 2007). In addition, people with severe chronic pain are much more likely than others to suffer from anxiety disorders or depression (McWilliams, Goodwin, & Cox, 2004; Williams et al., 2006). However, the direction of the cause and effect is not always clear (Gatchel & Epker, 1999). Patients suffering from chronic pain are more likely to be depressed, to abuse alcohol and other drugs, and to suffer from personality disorders. Some chronic pain patients develop these disorders because of their chronic pain, but others have some form of psychopathology prior to the beginning of their pain. For example, in a prospective study of children and adolescents, preexisting depression was one of the best predictors of a transition from acute pain to chronic pain (Holley, Wilson, & Palermo, 2017). Thus, individual differences exist in the experience of pain, but cultural and situational factors are more important.

Cultural Variations in Pain Perception. Large cultural differences exist in pain sensitivity and the expression

of pain behaviors. In addition, cultural background and social context affect the experience (Cleland, Palmer, & Venzke, 2005) and treatment (Cintron & Morrison, 2006) of pain. These differences come from varying meanings that different cultures attach to pain and from stereotypes associated with various cultural groups.

Cultural expectations for pain are apparent in the pain that women experience during childbirth (Callister, 2003; Streltzer, 1997). Some cultures hold birth as a dangerous and painful process, and women in these cultures reflect these expectations by experiencing great pain. Other cultures expect quiet acceptance during the experience of giving birth, and women in those cultures tend not to show much evidence of pain. When questioned about their apparent lack of pain, however, these women reported that, despite feeling pain, their culture did not expect women to show pain under these circumstances, so they did not (Wall, 2000).

Since the 1950s, studies have compared pain expression for people from various ethnic backgrounds (Ondeck, 2003; Streltzer, 1997). Some studies have shown differences and others have not, but the studies tend to suffer from the criticism of stereotyping. For example, a stereotype exists of Italians as people who show a lot of emotion. Consistent with this stereotype, studies have found that Italian Americans express more distress and demand more pain medication than "Yankees" (Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent who have lived in the United States for generations), who have a reputation for stoically ignoring pain (Rollman, 1998). These variations in pain behaviors among different cultures may reflect behavioral differences in learning and modeling, differences in sensitivity to pain, or some combination of these factors.

Laboratory studies confirm differences between African Americans and European Americans in sensitivity to painful stimuli. African Americans and Hispanic Americans show higher sensitivity to pain than European Americans (Rahim-Williams et al., 2012). These sensitivities may not translate directly into differences in the prevalence of chronic pain conditions between these groups, as ethnic differences in chronic pain prevalence are generally small and inconsistent across studies (Fillingim, 2017). There is clear evidence, however, that racial and ethnic differences exist in the severity and impact of chronic pain conditions. African Americans and European Americans may differ in how they cope with pain (Meints, Miller, & Hirsch, 2016), but they also are treated differently by the healthcare system. Physicians are more likely to underestimate

the pain reported by African Americans (Staton et al., 2007) and to prescribe less analgesia than they do for European Americans as outpatients, in hospitals, and in nursing homes, despite similar complaints about pain (Cintron & Morrison, 2006). Hispanics receive similar treatment—less analgesia in many types of medical settings. This discrimination in treatment is a source of needless pain for patients from these ethnic groups (Lavin & Park, 2012).

Gender Differences in Pain Perception. Another common stereotype about pain perception is that women are more sensitive to pain than men (Robinson et al., 2003), and this belief has some research support. Women report pain more readily than men (Fillingim, King, Ribeiro-Dasilva, Rahim-Williams, & Riley, 2009). Women also experience disabilities and chronic pain-related conditions more often than men (Croft, Blyth, & van der Windt, 2010; Nahin, 2015), however among those who suffer acute or chronic pain the gender differences are small (Fillingim et al., 2009). In laboratory studies in which men and women are exposed to the same pain stimulus, women tend to show greater sensitivity to and lower thresholds for pain (Fillingim, 2017), although this may depend on the type of pain. Women may have lower thresholds for pressure-related pain, but similar thresholds for cold and pain causes by restricted blood flow. Furthermore, women may tolerate less pain due to heat or cold than men but show the same tolerance as men for pain due to restricted blood flow (Racine et al., 2012). Thus, while gender differences in chronic pain exists, the basis for this difference remains unclear.

One explanation for these gender differences involves gender roles and socialization. A study of Swedish 9-, 12-, and 15-year-olds (Sundblad, Saartok, & Engström, 2007) showed more frequent reports of pain from girls than boys, and a decrease in pain reports for older boys but an increase among older girls. These changes are consistent with adoption of the male and female gender role; boys may learn to deny pain, whereas girls learn that reporting pain is consistent with their gender role. Consistent with this view, men who identify more highly with the male gender role are less likely than other men and less likely than women to report pain in a laboratory experiment (Pool et al., 2007).

Another explanation for gender differences posits that women may be more vulnerable than men to developing certain pain conditions. Some chronic pain syndromes, such as chronic fatigue syndrome, endometriosis, and fibromyalgia, occur only or mostly in women

(Fillingim et al., 2009). Sex hormones and gender differences in coping strategies may also contribute to gender differences in sensitivity to pain (Institute of Medicine, 2011; Picavet, 2010). For example, a meta-analysis of experimental studies showed that gender differences in pain threshold may differ according to the phase of a women's menstrual cycle, with women showing greater sensitivity to pain during the follicular phase than in other phases (Riley et al., 1999). The follicular phase is also when women with chronic pain conditions report the most severe pain (Martin, 2009).

However, other research fails to find dramatic differences between men and women. A study on women and men who had dental surgery (Averbuch & Katzper, 2000) reported that more women than men described their pain as severe but found very small differences between pain reports for men and women and no difference in their responses to analgesic drugs. A similar study with adolescents (Logan & Rose, 2004) showed similar results: Girls reported more pain but used no more analgesics than boys. Another study (Kim et al., 2004) found that women reported pain more readily than men in a laboratory situation but showed similar responses to pain associated with oral surgery. One reason why women may report more pain than men could be due to women's higher anxiety and threat related to their experiences of pain, which may be an important factor in gender differences in pain perception (Racine et al., 2012).

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Create a profile of two people, one whose psychosocial factors are associated with the highest likelihood of experiencing pain and another whose psychosocial factors are associated with the lowest likelihood of experiencing pain.

7-3 Theories of Pain

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 7-6** Understand and contrast three theories of pain and how they differ in their ability to explain several “mysteries” of pain

How people experience pain is the subject of a number of theories. Of the several models of pain, three capture the divergent ways of conceptualizing pain: the specificity theory, the gate control theory, and the neuromatrix theory.

Specificity Theory. Specificity theory explains pain by hypothesizing that specific pain fibers and pain pathways exist, making the experience of pain virtually equal to the amount of tissue damage or injury (Craig, 2003). The view that pain is the result of transmission of pain signals from the body to a “pain center” in the brain originated with Descartes, who in the 1600s proposed that the body works mechanically (DeLeo, 2006). Descartes hypothesized that the mind works by a different set of principles, and body and mind interact in only a limited way. Descartes’s view influenced not only the development of a science of physiology and medicine but also the view that pain is a physical experience largely uninfluenced by psychological factors (Melzack, 1993).

Working under the assumption that pain was the transmission of one type of sensory information, researchers tried to determine which type of receptor conveyed what type of sensory information (Melzack, 1973). For example, they tried to determine which type of receptor relayed information about heat, cold, and other types of pain. The attempt failed, as researchers found that some parts of

the body (such as the cornea of the eye) contain only one type of receptor, yet those areas feel a full range of sensations. Specificity does exist in the different types of sensory receptors and nerve fibers, such as light touch, pressure, itching, pricking, warmth, and cold (Craig, 2003). Yet, each of these sensations can become painful when intense, so any simple version of specificity theory is not valid.

The Gate Control Theory. In 1965, Melzack and Wall formulated a new theory of pain, which suggests that pain is *not* the result of a linear process that begins with sensory stimulation of pain pathways and ends with experiencing pain. Rather, pain perception is subject to a number of modulations that can influence the experience of pain. These modulations begin in the spinal cord.

Melzack and Wall hypothesized that structures located in the spinal cord act as a gate for the sensory input that the brain interprets as pain. Melzack and Wall’s theory is thus known as the **gate control theory** (see [Figure 7.4](#)). It has a basis in physiology but explains both sensory and psychological aspects of pain perception.

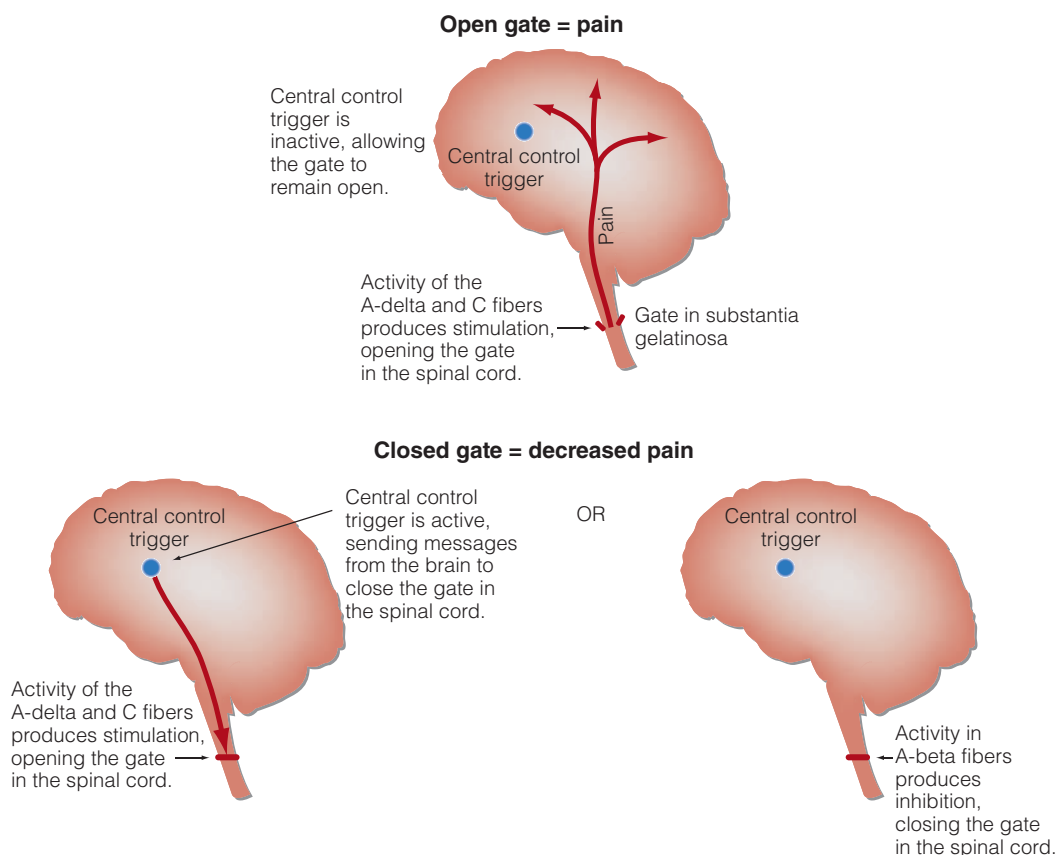


FIGURE 7.4 Gate control theory of pain.

Melzack and Wall (1965, 1982, 1988) pointed out that the nervous system is never at rest; the patterns of neural activation constantly change. When sensory information from the body reaches the dorsal horns of the spinal cord, that neural impulse enters a system that is already active, much like a car entering a highway from an on-ramp. The existing activity in the spinal cord and brain—like varying levels of traffic on a highway—influences the fate of incoming sensory information, sometimes amplifying and sometimes decreasing the incoming neural signals. The gate control theory hypothesizes that these complex modulations in both the spinal cord and the brain are critical factors in perceiving pain.

According to the gate control theory, neural mechanisms in the spinal cord act like a gate that can either increase (open the gate) or decrease (close the gate) the flow of neural impulses. If there is a lot of activity already occurring on the brain and spinal cord, the gate could close to prevent further traffic. However, if there is little activity in the brain and the spinal cord, then the gate could open to allow for more traffic. Figure 7.4 shows the results of opening and closing the gate. When the gate opens, impulses flow through the spinal cord toward the brain, neural messages reach the brain, and the person feels pain. When the gate closes, impulses do not ascend through the spinal cord, messages do not reach the brain, and the person does not feel pain. Moreover, sensory input is subject to modulation, depending on the activity of the large A-beta fibers, small A-delta fibers, and small C fibers entering the spinal cord and synapse in the dorsal horns.

The dorsal horns of the spinal cord are composed of several layers (laminae). As described earlier, two of these laminae make up the substantia gelatinosa, which is the hypothesized location of the gate (Melzack & Wall, 1965). Both the small A-delta and C fibers and the large A-beta fibers travel through the substantia gelatinosa, which also receives projections from other laminae (Melzack & Wall, 1982, 1988). This arrangement of neurons provides the physiological basis for the modulation of incoming sensory impulses.

Melzack and Wall (1982) proposed that activity in the small A-delta and C fibers causes prolonged activity in the spinal cord. This type of activity would promote sensitivity, which increases sensitivity to pain; such activity would thus open the gate. On the other hand, activity of the large A-beta fibers produces an initial burst of activity in the spinal cord, followed by

inhibition; such activity closes the gate. Subsequent research does not confirm this feature of the gate control theory in a clear way, however (Turk, 2001). Activity of A-delta and C fibers seems to relate to the experience of pain, but under conditions of inflammation, increased A-beta fiber activity can increase rather than decrease pain.

The gate may be closed by activity in the spinal cord, as well as by messages that descend from the brain. Melzack and Wall (1965, 1982, 1988) proposed the concept of a **central control trigger** consisting of nerve impulses that descend from the brain and influence the gating mechanism. They hypothesized that this system consists of large neurons that conduct impulses rapidly. These impulses from the brain, which cognitive processes can influence, affect the opening and closing of the gate in the spinal cord. That is, Melzack and Wall proposed that the experience of pain is influenced by beliefs and prior experience, and they also hypothesized a physiological mechanism that can account for such factors in pain perception. As we discussed, the periaqueductal gray matter furnishes descending controls (Mason, 2005), which is consistent with this aspect of the gate control theory.

According to the gate control theory, then, pain has not only sensory components but also motivational and emotional components. This aspect of the theory revolutionized conceptualizations of pain (Melzack, 2008). The gate control theory explains the influence of cognitive aspects of pain and allows for learning and experience to affect the experience of pain. Anxiety, worry, depression, and focusing on an injury can increase pain by affecting the central control trigger, thus opening the gate. Distraction, relaxation, and positive emotions can close the gate, thereby decreasing pain. The gate control theory is not specific about how these experiences affect pain, but recent experimental research confirms that factors such as mood indeed influence the extent of pain-related activity in the CNS. A team of Japanese researchers experimentally induced participants to experience either a sad, neutral, or positive mood. Following the mood induction, all participants experienced moderately painful electric shocks. Participants in a sad mood showed greater activity in brain regions associated with pain than participants in a neutral or positive mood (Yoshino et al., 2010). Thus, a person's emotional state modulated the amount of pain-related activity in the brain.

Many personal experiences with pain are consistent with the gate control theory. When you accidentally hit your finger with a hammer, many of the small fibers are activated, thus opening the gate. An emotional reaction accompanies your perception of acute pain. You may then grasp your injured finger and rub it. According to the gate control theory, rubbing stimulates the large fibers that close the gate, thus blocking stimulation from the small fibers and decreasing pain.

The gate control theory also explains how injuries can go virtually unnoticed. If sensory input enters a heavily activated nervous system, then the stimulation may not be perceived as pain. Recall Byron Leftwich, the football quarterback who played on a broken leg but had to be carried by his teammates during breaks in gameplay. During the excitement of gameplay, Byron's activated nervous system may have blocked some of the perception of pain. However, when gameplay was paused, the perception of the pain increased.

Although it is not universally accepted, the gate control theory is the most influential theory of pain (Sufka & Price, 2002). This theory allows for the complexities of pain experiences. Melzack and Wall proposed the gate control theory before the discovery of the body's own opiates or of the descending control mechanisms through the periaqueductal gray and the medulla, both of which offer supporting evidence. The gate control theory has been and continues to be successful in spurring research and generating interest in the psychological and perceptual factors involved in pain.

More recently, Melzack (1993, 2005) proposed an extension to the gate control theory called the *neuromatrix theory*, which places a stronger emphasis on the brain's role in pain perception. He hypothesized a network of brain neurons that he called the neuromatrix, "a large, widespread network of neurons that consists of loops between the thalamus and cortex as well as between the cortex and limbic system" (Melzack, 2005, p. 86). Normally, the neuromatrix processes incoming sensory information including pain, but the neuromatrix can act even in the absence of sensory input, producing phantom limb sensations (phantom limb sensations are an unusual form of pain that we describe in the next section). Melzack's neuromatrix theory extends gate control theory but maintains that pain perception is part of a complex process affected not only by sensory input but also by nervous system activity and by experience and expectation.

IN SUMMARY

Although the extent of damage is important in the pain experience, personal perception is also important. Pain can be acute, prechronic, or chronic, depending on the length of time that the pain has persisted. Acute pain is usually adaptive and lasts for less than six months. Chronic pain continues beyond the time of healing, often in the absence of detectable tissue damage. Prechronic pain occurs between acute and chronic pain. All of these stages of pain appear in pain syndromes, such as headache pain, low back pain, arthritic pain, cancer pain, and phantom limb pain.

Several models seek to explain pain, but specificity theory does not capture the complexity of the pain experience. The gate control theory is the most influential model of pain. This theory holds that mechanisms in the spinal cord and the brain can increase or diminish pain. Since its formulation, increased knowledge of the physiology of the brain and spinal cord has supported this theory. The neuromatrix theory extends the gate control theory by hypothesizing the existence of a set of neurons in the brain that maintain a pattern of activity that defines the self and yet also responds to expectations and to incoming signals such as pain.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Identify the theories that would best explain the following situations involving pain: (1) why a person who suffers more tissue damage would report more pain than someone who suffers less tissue damage; (2) why the amount of pain a person experiences is shaped by psychological factors; (3) why a person might experience pain even when no obvious bodily injury exists.

7-4 Pain Syndromes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

7-7 Understand some of the major types of pain syndromes

Acute pain is both a blessing and a burden. The blessing comes from the signals it sends about injury and the

reminders it conveys to avoid further injury and allow healing. The burden is that it hurts.

Chronic pain, in contrast, serves no clear purpose; it signals no injury and causes people to live in misery. More than 30% of the population of the United States (Institute of Medicine, 2011) and almost 20% of those in Europe (Corasaniti et al., 2006) experience chronic or intermittent persistent pain. Nearly 10% of Americans report not just some chronic pain, but a *lot* of it (Nahin, 2015). Indeed, chronic pain accounts for more than 80% of visits to doctors (Gatchel et al., 2007). Chronic pain often results in poor sleep, and poor sleep intensifies pain, creating a cycle that may prolong suffering (Babiloni et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the prevalence of chronic pain in the United States is likely to rise in the upcoming decades due to an aging population and increases in the prevalence of obesity (Croft et al., 2010). In fact, one aim of the United States 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was to “increase the recognition of pain as a significant public health problem in the United States.”

Chronic pain is categorized according to **syndrome**, or symptoms that occur together and characterize a condition. Headache and low back pain are the two most frequently treated pain syndromes, but people also seek treatment for several other common pain syndromes.

Headache Pain

Headache pain is the most common of all types of pain, with more than 99% of people experiencing headache at some time during their lives (Smetana, 2000) and 16% of people reporting severe headaches in the last three months (CDC and NCHS, 2010d). Until the 1980s, no reliable classification of headache pain was available to researchers and therapists. Then in 1988, the Headache Classification Committee of the International Headache Society (IHS) published a classification system standardizing definitions of various headache pains (Olesen, 1988). Although the IHS identifies many different kinds of headache, the three primary pain syndromes are migraine, tension, and cluster headaches.

Migraine headaches represent recurrent attacks of pain that vary widely in intensity, frequency, and duration. Originally conceptualized as originating in the blood vessels in the head, migraine headaches are now believed to involve not only blood vessels but also a complex cascade of reactions that include neurons in the brain stem (Corasaniti et al., 2006) and to have



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Headache is the most common of all types of pain—more than 99% of people have experienced a headache.

a genetic component (Bigal & Lipton, 2008a). The underlying cause and the exact mechanism for producing pain remain controversial. Migraine attacks often occur with loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, and exaggerated sensitivity to light and sound. Migraine headaches often involve sensory, motor, or mood disturbances. Migraines also exist in two varieties: those with aura and those without aura. Migraines with aura have identifiable sensory disturbances that precede the headache pain. Migraines without aura have a sudden onset and an intense throbbing, usually (but not always) restricted to one side of the head. Brain imaging studies indicate that these two varieties of migraine affect the brain in somewhat different ways (Sánchez del Río & Álvarez Linera, 2004).

The epidemiology of migraine headaches includes gender differences and variations in prevalence around the world. Women are two to three times more likely than men to have migraine headaches, with rates in the United States of 6% to 9% for men and 17% to 18% for women (Lipton et al., 2007; Victor et al., 2010). Rates for non-Western countries are lower. For example, between 3% and 7% of people in Africa report migraines (Haimanot, 2002). However, the experience of migraine is similar; men and women who have chronic migraines have similar experiences of symptoms, frequency, and severity (Marcus, 2001). Most migraine patients experience their first headache before age 30 and some before age 10. However, the period for the greatest frequency of migraines is between ages 30 and 50 (Morillo et al.,

2005). Few patients have a first migraine after age 40, but people who have migraines continue to do so, often throughout their lives.

Tension headaches are muscular in origin, accompanied by sustained contractions of the muscles of the neck, shoulders, scalp, and face, but current explanations (Fumal & Schoenen, 2008) also include mechanisms within the CNS. Tension headaches have a gradual onset; sensations of tightness; constriction or pressure; highly variable intensity, frequency, and duration; and a dull, steady ache on both sides of the head. Nearly 40% of the U.S. population experiences tension headaches (Schwartz et al., 1998), and people with this pain syndrome reported lost workdays and decreased effectiveness at work, home, and school because of their pain.

A third type of headache is the **cluster headache**, a severe headache that occurs in daily or nearly daily clusters (Favier, Haan, & Ferrari, 2005). Some symptoms are like those of migraine, including severe pain and vomiting, but cluster headaches are much briefer, rarely lasting longer than two hours (Smetana, 2000). The headache occurs on one side of the head, and often the eye on the other side becomes bloodshot and waters. In addition, cluster headaches are more common in men than in women, by a ratio of 2 to 1 (Bigal & Lipton, 2008b). Most people who have cluster headaches experience episodes of headache, with weeks, months, or years of no headache (Favier et al., 2005). Cluster headaches are even more mysterious than other types of headaches, with no clear understanding of risk factors.

Low back pain is experienced by as many as 80% of people in the United States at some time, making the problem extensive but not necessarily serious. Most injuries are not permanent, and most people recover (Leeuw et al., 2007). Those who do not recover quickly have a poor prognosis and are likely to develop chronic pain problems. Health care expenditures for these people total more than \$90 billion a year in the United States (Luo, 2004). The incidence of low back pain shows some variation for countries around the world (European Vertebral Osteoporosis Study Group, 2004), but this condition produces direct expenses, such as medical care, and indirect costs, such as lost workdays and disability, affecting people in countries around the world (Dagenais, Caro, & Haldeman, 2008).

Infections, degenerative diseases, and malignancies can all cause low back pain. However, the most frequent cause of low back pain is probably injury

or stress resulting in musculoskeletal, ligament, and neurological problems in the lower back (Chou et al., 2007). Pregnancy is also a cause of low back pain, with nearly 90% of pregnant women suffering from the syndrome (Hayes et al., 2000). Aging is yet another factor in back pain; the fluid content and elasticity of the intervertebral disks decrease as one grows older, and arthritis and osteoporosis become more likely. However, fewer than 20% of back pain patients have a definite identification of the physical cause of their pain (Chou et al., 2007).

Stress and psychological factors most likely play a role not only in back pain but also in all types of chronic pain. Making the transition from the pre-chronic stage to chronic pain is a complex process, and physiological and psychological processes accompany this progression. Some researchers (Baliki et al., 2008; Corasaniti et al., 2006) focus on physical changes in the nervous system that occur when pain becomes chronic. Other researchers (Leeuw et al., 2007; Sanders, 2006) emphasize psychological factors such as fear, anxiety, depression, a history of trauma and abuse, and reinforcement experiences, all of which are more common among chronic pain patients. However, most chronic pain researchers recognize the role that both physical and psychological factors play in causing and maintaining chronic pain.

Arthritis Pain

Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disorder characterized by swelling and inflammation of the joints, as well as destruction of cartilage, bone, and tendons. These changes alter the joint, producing direct pain, and the changes in joint structure lead to changes in movement, which may result in additional pain through this indirect route (Dillard, 2002). Rheumatoid arthritis can occur at any age, even during adolescence and young adulthood, but it is most prevalent among people 40 to 70 years old. Women are more than twice as likely as men to develop this disease (Theis, Helmick, & Hootman, 2007). The symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis are extremely variable. Some people experience a steady worsening of symptoms, but most people face alternating remission and intensification of symptoms. Rheumatoid arthritis interferes with work, family life, recreational activities, and sexuality (Pouchot et al., 2007).

Osteoarthritis is a progressive inflammation of the joints that produces degeneration of cartilage and bone



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Arthritis is a source of pain and disability for more than 20 million Americans.

(Goldring & Goldring, 2007); it affects mostly older people. Osteoarthritis causes a dull ache in the joint area, which worsens with movement; the resulting lack of movement increases joint problems and pain. Osteoarthritis is the most common form of arthritis, which is one of the primary causes of disability in older people, affecting about 50% of those over 70 (Keefe et al., 2002). Older women make up a disproportionate number of those affected. As joints stiffen and pain increases, people with arthritis begin to have difficulties engaging in enjoyable activities and even basic self-care. They often experience feelings of helplessness, depression, and anxiety, which exacerbate their pain.

Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain condition characterized by tender points throughout the body. This disorder also has symptoms of fatigue, headache, cognitive difficulties, anxiety, and sleep disturbances (Chakrabarty & Zoorob, 2007). Although fibromyalgia is not arthritis (Endresen, 2007), some symptoms are common to both, as is a diminished quality of life (Birtane et al., 2007).

Cancer Pain

More than 13 million people in the United States have a cancer diagnosis (Mariotto et al., 2011). Cancer can

produce pain in two ways: through its growth and progression and through the various treatments to control its growth. Pain is present in 44% of all cancer cases and in 64% or more of advanced cases (Institute of Medicine, 2011). Some cancers are much more likely than others to produce pain. Head, neck, and cervical cancer patients experience more pain than leukemia patients (Anderson, Syrjala, & Cleeland, 2001). In addition, treatments for cancer may also produce pain; surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy all produce painful effects. Thus, either the disease or its treatment creates pain for most cancer patients. However, many cancer patients do not get adequate relief from pain. A review of 26 international studies showed that across countries, almost half of cancer patients' pain was untreated (Deandrea et al., 2008).

Phantom Limb Pain

Just as injury can occur without producing pain, pain can occur in the absence of injury. One such type of pain is **phantom limb pain**, the experience sometimes reported by amputees of chronic pain in a part of the body that no longer exists. Amputation removes the nerves that produce the impulses leading to the

experience of pain, but not the sensations. Most amputees experience some sensations from the amputated limb, and many of these sensations are painful (Czerniecki & Ehde, 2003).

Until the 1970s, phantom pain was believed to be rare, with less than 1% of amputees experiencing a painful phantom limb, but more recent research has indicated that the percentage may be as high as 80% (Ephraim et al., 2005). The sensations often start soon after surgery as a tingling and then develop into other sensations that resemble actual feelings in the missing limb, including pain. Nor are the sensations of phantom pain limited to limbs. Women who have undergone breast removal also perceive sensations from the amputated breast, and people who have had teeth pulled sometimes continue to experience feelings from those teeth.

Amputees sometimes feel that a phantom limb is of abnormal size or in an uncomfortable position (Melzack & Wall, 1982). Phantom limbs can also produce painful feelings of cramping, shooting, burning, or crushing. These pains vary from mild and infrequent to severe and continuous. Early research suggested that the severity and frequency of the pain decrease over time (Melzack & Wall, 1988); however, subsequent research suggests that phantom pain may remain over time (Ephraim et al., 2005). In fact, nearly 75% of amputees who lost a limb over 10 years earlier still report phantom pains (Ephraim et al., 2005). Pain is more likely to occur in the missing limb when the person experienced a great deal of pain before the amputation (Hanley et al., 2007).

The underlying cause of phantom limb pain is the subject of heated controversy (Melzack, 1992; Woodhouse, 2005). Because surgery rarely relieves the pain, some authorities suggest that phantom limb pain has an emotional basis. Melzack (1992) argued that phantom limb sensations arise because of the activation of a characteristic pattern of neural activity in the brain, which he called a *neuromatrix*. The neuromatrix may be likened to a software program in the brain; when this program is turned on, it creates the subjective experience of pain. In ordinary circumstances, pain receptors in the PNS provide the input to “turn on” the neuromatrix. However, in phantom limb pain, the input comes from elsewhere, and the neuromatrix pattern continues to operate, even if the neurons in the PNS do not furnish input to the brain.

Melzack believed that this pattern of brain activity is the basis for phantom limb sensations, which may include pain, and recent research is consistent with his theory (Woodhouse, 2005). Brain imaging technology allows researchers to investigate patterns of brain activation, and such studies show that the brain is capable of reorganization after injury, producing changes in the nervous system. Such changes are observed in the somatosensory and motor cortex of amputees (Flor, Nikolajsen, & Staehelin Jensen, 2006; Karl et al., 2004), which is consistent with Melzack’s concept of the neuromatrix and its role in phantom limb pain. Therefore, phantom limb pain may arise from changes that occur in both peripheral and central nervous systems after removal of the limb. Rather than compensate for the loss, the nervous system makes changes that are maladaptive, creating the perception of pain in a body part that no longer exists.

IN SUMMARY

Acute pain may result from hundreds of different types of injuries and diseases, but chronic pain exists as a limited number of syndromes. A few of these syndromes account for the majority of people who suffer from chronic pain. Headache is the most common type of pain, but only some people experience chronic problems with migraine, tension, or cluster headaches. Most people’s experience of low back pain is acute, but for some people the pain becomes chronic and debilitating. Arthritis is a degenerative disease that affects the joints, producing chronic pain. Rheumatoid arthritis is an autoimmune disease that may affect people of any age; osteoarthritis is the result of progressive inflammation of the joints that affects mostly older people. Fibromyalgia is a chronic pain condition characterized by pain throughout the body, sleep disturbances, fatigue, and anxiety. Pain is not an inevitable consequence of cancer, but most people with cancer experience pain either because of the progression of the disease or from the various treatments for cancer. One of the most puzzling pain syndromes is phantom limb pain, which represents pain that occurs in a missing body part. A majority of people with amputations experience this pain syndrome.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

Classify the major pain syndromes in terms of:

1. Prevalence: Which syndromes are most common, and which appear to be least common?
2. Age: Which syndromes are more likely to appear as people get older?
3. Location: Why syndromes are associated with localized pain, and which are associated with pain throughout the body?

7-5 The Measurement of Pain

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 7-8** Identify the strengths and limitations of three methods of measuring pain: self-report, behavioral assessment, and physiological measurement

“I have been told to ‘suck it up’; I have been asked if I was having trouble at home; I have been accused of being a ‘druggie.’ I have also found some practitioners who could ‘read the tea leaves,’ so to speak and TELL ME how much pain I must be in, based on my physical exam.”—A person with chronic pain (Institute of Medicine, 2011, p. 59).

Pain, at its core, is a subjective experience. No doctor or other outside observer can know how much pain a patient experiences. The subjective nature of pain presents a great challenge to researchers and clinicians who seek to understand and treat pain. How can clinicians and researchers assess pain most accurately? Are there reliable and valid ways of assessing pain, other than asking a person to tell you?

Asking physicians (Marquié et al., 2003; Staton et al., 2007) or nurses (Wilson & McSherry, 2006) to rate their patients’ pain is not a valid approach because these professionals tend to underestimate patients’ pain. Furthermore, racial biases may exist in relying on providers’ estimates of patients’ pain, as providers may hold false beliefs about ethnic differences in pain. For example, a substantial number of European American medical students believe that African Americans feel less pain than other groups and consequently rated the pain of African Americans lower and made

less accurate treatment recommendations to them (Hoffman et al., 2016).

Asking people to rate their own prior experiences of pain on a scale would seem reliable and valid. Who knows better than patients themselves how much pain they feel? However, some pain experts (Turk & Melzack, 2001) have questioned both the reliability and the validity of this procedure, stating that people do not reliably remember how they rated an earlier pain. For this reason, pain researchers have developed several techniques for measuring pain, including (1) self-report ratings, (2) behavioral assessments, and (3) physiological measures.

Self-Reports

Self-report pain assessments ask people to evaluate and make ratings of their pain on simple rating scales, standardized pain inventories, or standardized personality tests.

Rating Scales. Simple rating scales are an important part of the pain measurement toolbox. For example, patients may rate the intensity of their pain on a scale from 0 to 10 (or 0 to 100), with 10 being the most excruciating pain possible and 0 being the complete absence of pain. Such numeric ratings showed advantages over other types of self-reports in a comparison of several approaches to pain assessment (Gagliese et al., 2005).

A similar technique is the Visual Analog Scale (VAS), which is simply a line anchored on the left by a phrase such as “no pain” and on the right by a phrase such as “worst pain imaginable.” Both the VAS and numerical rating scales are easy to use. For some pain patients, the VAS is superior to word descriptors of pain (Rosier, Iadarola, & Coghill, 2002) and numerical ratings (Bigatti & Cronan, 2002). Visual analog scales have been criticized as sometimes being confusing to patients not accustomed to quantifying their experience (Burckhardt & Jones, 2003b) and difficult for those who cannot comprehend the instructions, such as older people with dementia or young children (Feldt, 2007). Another rating scale is the face scales, consisting of 8 to 10 drawings of faces expressing emotions from intense joy to intense pain; patients merely indicate which illustration best fits their level of pain (Jensen & Karoly, 2001). This type of rating is effective with both children and older adults (Benaim et al., 2007). A limitation of each of these rating scales is that they measure only the

intensity of pain; they do not tap into patients' verbal description of their pain, such as whether it is sharp or dull. Despite this limitation, this approach to pain assessment may be the simplest and most effective for many patients.

Pain Questionnaires. Melzack (1975, p. 278) contended that describing pain on a single dimension was “like specifying the visual world only in terms of light flux without regard to pattern, color, texture, and the many other dimensions of visual experience.” Rating scales make no distinction, for example, among pains that are pounding, shooting, stabbing, or hot.

To rectify some of these weaknesses, Melzack (1975) developed the McGill Pain Questionnaire (MPQ), an inventory that provides a subjective report of pain and categorizes it in three dimensions: sensory, affective, and evaluative. *Sensory* qualities of pain are its temporal, spatial, pressure, and thermal properties. *Affective* qualities are the fear, tension, and autonomic properties that are part of the pain experience. *Evaluative* qualities are the words that describe the subjective overall intensity of the pain experience.

The MPQ has four parts that assess these three dimensions of pain. Part 1 consists of front and back drawings of the human body. Patients mark on these drawings indicating the areas where they feel pain. Part 2 consists of 20 sets of words describing pain, and patients draw a circle around the one word in each set that most accurately describes their pain. These adjectives appear from least to most painful—for example, *nagging*, *nauseating*, *agonizing*, *dreadful*, and *torturing*. Part 3 asks how the patient's pain has changed with time. Part 4 measures the intensity of pain on a 5-point scale from *mild* to *excruciating*. This fourth part yields a Present Pain Intensity (PPI) score.

The MPQ is the most frequently used pain questionnaire (Piotrowski, 1998, 2007), and a short form of the McGill Pain Questionnaire (Melzack, 1987) preserves the multidimensional assessment and correlates highly with scores on the standard MPQ (Burckhardt & Jones, 2003a). Clinicians use the MPQ to assess pain relief in a variety of treatment programs and in multiple pain syndromes (Melzack & Katz, 2001). The MPQ also exists in 26 different languages (Costa et al., 2009). The short form is growing in use and demonstrates a high degree of reliability (Grafton, Foster, & Wright, 2005). In addition, a computerized, touch-screen administration of this test exists, which shows a high degree of consistency with the paper-and-pencil version (Cook et al., 2004).

The Multidimensional Pain Inventory (MPI), also known as the West Haven–Yale Multidimensional Pain Inventory (WHYMPI), is another assessment tool specifically designed for pain patients (Kerns, Turk, & Rudy, 1985). The 52-item MPI is divided into three sections. The first section rates characteristics of the pain, interference with patients' lives and functioning, and patients' moods. The second section rates patients' perceptions of the responses of significant others, and the third measures how often patients engage in each of the 30 different daily activities. This inventory has allowed researchers (Kerns et al., 1985) to develop 12 different scales that capture various important dimensions of the lives of pain patients.

Standardized Psychological Tests. In addition to the specialized pain inventories, clinicians and researchers also use a variety of standardized psychological tests in assessing pain. The most frequently used of these tests is the MMPI-2 (Arbisi & Seime, 2006). The MMPI measures clinical diagnoses such as depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, and other psychopathologies. Research from the early 1950s (Hanvik, 1951) found that different types of pain patients could be differentiated on several MMPI scales, and more recent research (Arbisi & Seime, 2006) confirms the use of the MMPI for such assessment. One of the major advantages of using the MMPI-2 for pain assessment is its ability to detect patients who are being dishonest about their experience of pain (Bianchini et al., 2008).

Researchers also use the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck et al., 1961) and the Symptom Checklist–90 (Derogatis, 1977) to measure pain. The Beck Depression Inventory is a short self-report questionnaire that assesses depression; the Symptom Checklist–90 measures symptoms related to various types of behavioral problems. People with chronic pain often experience negative moods, so the relationship between scores on psychological tests and pain is not surprising. However, factor analyses of the Beck Depression Inventory with pain patients (Morley, de C. Williams, & Black, 2002; Poole, Branwell, & Murphy, 2006) indicate that pain patients present a different profile than depressed people with no chronic pain. Specifically, chronic pain patients are less likely to endorse negative beliefs about the self than depressed people but are more likely to report behavioral and emotional symptoms of depression. Like the MMPI-2, the Symptom Checklist–90 (McGuire & Shores, 2001) is also able to differentiate pain patients from those instructed to fake pain symptoms.

Thus, these standardized psychological tests may have something to offer in the assessment of pain, including the ability to identify people who may be exaggerating symptoms of pain.

Behavioral Assessments

A second major approach to pain measurement is observing patients' behavior. Influential researcher Wilbert Fordyce (1974) noted that people in pain often groan, grimace, rub, sigh, limp, miss work, remain in bed, or engage in other behaviors that signify to observers that they may be suffering from pain, including lowered levels of activity, use of pain medication, body posture, and facial expressions. Behavioral observation began as an informal way to assess pain; Fordyce (1976) trained spouses to record pain behaviors, working to obtain a list of between 5 and 10 behaviors that indicate pain for each individual.

Health care professionals tend to underestimate patients' pain (Staton et al., 2007; Wilson & McSherry, 2006) and require extensive training to overcome their bias (Keefe & Smith, 2002; Rapoff, 2003). Another way for health care professionals to assess pain is through the development of behavioral observation into a standardized assessment strategy (Keefe & Smith, 2002). During an observational protocol, pain patients perform a series of tasks while a trained observer records their body movements and facial expressions, noting signs of pain. For example, patients with low back pain may be asked to sit, stand, walk, and recline during a one-to-two-minute observation. The session may be videotaped to allow other observers to rate pain-related behaviors such as limping and grimacing. This strategy for collecting information yields data about pain behaviors, and analyses confirm that these data are reliable and valid indicators of pain (Keefe & Smith, 2002).

Behavioral observation is especially useful in assessing the pain of people who have difficulty furnishing self-reports—children, the cognitively impaired, and some elderly patients. This approach includes assessments of children's pain (von Baeyer & Spagrud, 2007) and a coding system that allows observers to assess the pain of infants by observing five facial movements and two hand actions (Holsti & Grunau, 2007). Many older patients can report on their pain, but some cannot, and behavioral observation of facial expressions allows an assessment of this difficult group (Clark, Jones, & Pennington, 2004; Lints-Martindale et al., 2007).



Facial expressions provide a behavioral measure of pain.

Physiological Measures

A third approach to pain assessment is the use of physiological measures (Gatchel, 2005). Electromyography (EMG), which measures the level of muscle tension, is one of these physiological techniques. The notion behind this approach is that pain increases muscle tension. Attaching the measuring electrodes to the surface of the skin provides an easy way to measure muscle tension, but questions have arisen over the validity of this measurement as a pain indicator. For example, Herta Flor (2001) reported little consistency between self-reports of pain and EMG levels. A meta-analysis of EMG assessment of low back pain (Geisser et al., 2005) indicated that EMG was useful in discriminating those with versus those without low back pain, but EMG alone was not an adequate assessment.

Researchers have also attempted to assess pain through several autonomic indices, including involuntary processes such as hyperventilation, blood flow in the temporal artery, heart rate, hand-surface temperature, finger pulse volume, and skin conductance level. Heart rate predicts perceptions of pain, but only for men (Loggia, Juneau, & Bushnell, 2011; Tousignant-Laflamme, Rainville, & Marchand, 2005). In experimental tasks, changes in skin conductance levels correlate with changes in the intensity of a pain stimulus and changes in pain perceptions; however, this method is not well suited for assessing differences

between people in clinical pain reports (Loggia et al., 2011). Researchers and clinicians primarily use these physiological assessments with patients who cannot furnish self-reports but more often use behavioral observation of pain-related behaviors for these groups.

IN SUMMARY

Pain measurement techniques fall into three general categories: (1) self-reports, (2) behavioral observation, and (3) physiological measures. Self-reports include rating scales, pain questionnaires such as the MPQ and the MPI, and standardized objective tests such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and the Beck Depression Inventory. Clinicians who treat pain patients often use a combination of assessments, relying most often on self-report inventories. Behavioral assessments of pain began as informal observation but have evolved into standardized ratings by trained clinicians that are especially useful for individuals, such as young children and people with dementia, who cannot complete self-reports. Physiological measures include muscle tension and autonomic indices such as heart rate, but these approaches are not as reliable or valid as self-reports or behavioral observation.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Rank the methods of measuring pain from those that appear to be most valid to those that appear to be least valid.

7-6 Managing Pain

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 7-9** Identify the major medical approaches for managing pain, as well as their potential risks
- 7-10** Identify major behavioral techniques for managing pain, and the psychological factors that each technique addresses

Pain presents complex problems for management. Treatment for acute pain is usually straightforward

because the source of the pain is clear. However, helping people with chronic pain is a challenge because this type of pain exists without obvious tissue damage. Some people achieve relief through medical treatments, and others experience improvement through behavioral management of their pain.

Medical Approaches to Managing Pain

Drugs are the main medical strategy for treating acute pain. Although drugs are also a choice for some chronic pain syndromes, this strategy carries greater risks. Chronic pain that has not responded to drugs may be treated by surgery, which also presents risks.

Drugs. **Analgesic drugs** relieve pain without causing loss of consciousness. Hundreds of different analgesic drugs are available, but almost all fall into two major groups: the opiates and the nonnarcotic analgesics (Julien, Advokat, & Comaty, 2010). Both types exist naturally as derivatives of plants, and both have many synthetic variations. Of the two, the opium type is more powerful and has a longer history of use, dating back at least 5,000 years (Melzack & Wall, 1982).

Contemporary **opiate painkillers** include substances such as morphine, codeine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone (an active ingredient in the drug known as Vicodin). The use of these painkillers is limited by prescription from a physician, as use can lead to the development of both tolerance and dependence. **Tolerance** is the body's decreased responsiveness to a drug. When tolerance occurs, larger and larger doses of a drug are required to bring about the same effect. **Dependence** occurs when the drug's removal produces withdrawal symptoms. Because opiates produce both tolerance and dependence, they are potentially dangerous and subject to abuse.

How realistic are the fears of drug abuse due to opiate prescription? Do patients become addicted while recovering from surgery? What about the dangers to patients with terminal illnesses? During the late 1990s, prescriptions for opiate analgesics increased dramatically, and publicity about an epidemic of analgesic abuse fueled the fear that increased prescriptions for these drugs were leading to widespread addiction. Despite increases in opiate use and abuse, the number of chronic pain patients who develop an addiction to opiate pain medications is roughly 10% of the number who are prescribed them (Vowles

et al., 2015), although approximately 25% of people prescribed opiate painkillers may misuse them. To date, the best predictor of opiate painkiller abuse is personal history of illegal drug and alcohol use; people who misuse these substances are more likely to also misuse opiate painkillers (Bakalov et al., 2019; Turk, Swanson, & Gatchel, 2008).

Between 1997 and 2007, the use of opiate analgesic drugs increased over 600% (Paulozzi et al., 2012). Although prescriptions for opiates have declined somewhat since 2010 (Guy et al., 2017), opiate-related deaths continue to rise (Vivolo-Kantor et al., 2018). Much of this increase was for the drugs oxycodone and hydrocodone. Both are opiates with a potential for abuse, which increased during the time when prescriptions increased. Wariness about abuse of these drugs affects both physicians, who are reluctant to prescribe them (Breuer et al., 2011), and many patients, who are reluctant to take sufficient doses to obtain relief (Lewis, Combs, & Traf-ton, 2010). This reluctance applies to all opiate drugs, even for cancer pain (Reid, Gooberman-Hill, & Hanks, 2008). Thus, people with either acute or chronic pain frequently fail to receive sufficient relief.

The advantages of opiate drugs outweigh their dangers for some people in some situations; no other type of drug produces more complete pain relief. However, their potential for abuse and their side effects make them more suitable for treating acute pain than for managing chronic pain, as there is limited evidence supporting their long-term use for chronic pain (Manchikanti et al., 2011). The opiate drugs remain an essential part of pain management for the most severe, acute injuries, for recovery from surgery, and for terminal illnesses.

One procedure that has overcome the undermedication problem is a system of self-paced administration. Patients can activate a pump attached to their intravenous lines and deliver a dose of medication whenever they wish, within well-defined limits. Such systems began to appear in the late 1970s and have since gained wide acceptance because patients tend to use less medication, obtain better pain relief (Sri Vengadesh, Sistla, & Smile, 2005), and experience higher satisfaction (Gan et al., 2007). Because an intravenous line is necessary for this system of drug delivery, it is most commonly used to control pain following surgery. However, a patient-controlled transdermal delivery system is also available (D'Arcy, 2005). This system allows people to self-administer analgesia through a device about the size of a credit card that adheres to their upper arm.

These types of self-administered analgesics help prevent undermedication.

Whereas undermedication may be a problem for cancer pain patients, overmedication is often a problem for patients suffering from low back pain. One team of investigators (Von Korff et al., 1994) grouped primary care physicians according to their low, moderate, or high frequency of prescribing pain medication and bed rest for back pain patients. One- and two-year follow-ups found that back pain patients who took less medication and remained active did just as well as those who were told to take more medication and to rest. Another study (Rhee et al., 2007) found that back pain patients who took opiate drugs experienced more frequent health problems such as hypertension, anxiety, depression, and arthritis. In addition, they were more likely to make a visit to a hospital emergency room. Both studies indicated that treatment for these patients was more costly than for patients who took other approaches to managing back pain. Thus, low back pain patients who use pain medication have poorer outcomes, more health problems, and higher costs than those who do not. Unfortunately, opiate prescriptions for low back pain appear to be increasing rather than decreasing in frequency (Mafi et al., 2013).

The **nonnarcotic analgesics** include a variety of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) as well as acetaminophen. Aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen sodium appear to block the synthesis of prostaglandins (Julien et al., 2010), a class of chemicals released by damaged tissue and involved in inflammation. The



Drugs offer effective treatment for acute pain but are not a good choice to treat chronic pain.

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presence of these chemicals sensitizes neurons and increases pain. These drugs act at the site of injury instead of crossing into the brain, but they change neurochemical activity in the nervous system and affect pain perception. As a result of their mechanism of action, NSAIDs do not alter pain perception when no injury is present—for example, in laboratory situations with people who receive experimental pain stimuli.

Aspirin and other NSAIDs have many uses in pain relief, including for minor cuts and scratches, as well as more severe injuries such as broken bones. But pain that occurs without inflammation is not so readily relieved by NSAIDs. In addition, NSAIDs can irritate and damage the stomach lining, even producing ulcers (Huang, Sridhar, & Hunt, 2002). Aspirin's side effects include the alteration of blood-clotting time, and aspirin and other NSAIDs are toxic in large doses, causing damage to the liver and kidneys.

A new type of NSAID, the Cox-2 inhibitor, affects prostaglandins but has lower gastric toxicity. After the approval and heavy marketing of these drugs, their sales skyrocketed, especially among people with arthritis. However, the discovery of increased heart attack risk led to the withdrawal of two Cox-2 inhibitors from the market in the United States and increased caution in the use of this type of NSAID (Shi & Klotz, 2008).

Acetaminophen, another nonnarcotic analgesic, is not one of the NSAIDs. Under brand names such as Tylenol, acetaminophen has become a widely used painkiller. It has few anti-inflammatory properties but has a pain-relieving capability similar to that of aspirin, though somewhat weaker. Acetaminophen does not have the gastric side effects of aspirin, so people who cannot tolerate aspirin find it a good substitute. However, acetaminophen is not harmless. Large quantities of acetaminophen can be fatal, and even nonlethal doses can do serious damage to the liver, especially when combined with alcohol (Julien et al., 2010).

Analgesic drugs are not the only drugs that affect pain. Antidepressant drugs and drugs used to treat seizures also influence pain perception, and these drugs can be used to treat some types of pain (Mazels & McCarberg, 2005). Antidepressants can be useful in treating low back pain, and some types of anticonvulsant medication can help people with migraine headaches. In addition, other drugs exist that have some ability to prevent migraine headaches (Peres et al., 2006) and to reduce the inflammation that is a damaging part

of rheumatoid arthritis (Iagnocco et al., 2008). Similar developments for other chronic pain syndromes would change the lives of millions of people. Unfortunately, even the variety of drugs and strategies for their use are not adequate for many people with chronic pain. Those individuals may consider surgery or other treatments to attain relief.

Surgery. Another traditional medical treatment for pain is surgery, which aims to repair the source of the pain or alter the nervous system to alleviate the pain. Low back surgery is the most common surgical approach to pain, but surgery is not an option that physicians recommend unless other, less invasive possibilities have failed (van Zundert & van Kleef, 2005).

Surgery can also alter nerves that transmit pain (van Zundert & van Kleef, 2005). This procedure may use heat, cold, or radiofrequency stimulation to change neural transmission and control pain. Complete destruction of nerves is not typically the aim because it can lead to loss of all sensation, which may be more distressing than pain. Another tactic for altering pain through changing nerve transmission involves stimulation of nerves through implanted wires that stimulate rather than damage nerves. Surgery is required for this approach, which involves implanting devices that can deliver electrical stimulation to either the spinal cord or the brain. Activation of the system produces pain relief by activating neurons and by releasing neurotransmitters that block pain. This process does not destroy neural tissue.

Spinal stimulation is a promising technique for controlling back pain (De Andrés & Van Buyten, 2006), but a related type of stimulation, **transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS)**, has proven to be less effective. The TENS system typically consists of electrodes that attach to the skin and are connected to a unit that supplies electrical stimulation. Despite some promising early indications of success, TENS has demonstrated only limited effectiveness in controlling pain (Claydon et al., 2011).

Surgery has at least two drawbacks as a treatment for pain. First, it does not always repair damaged tissue, and second, it does not provide all patients with sufficient pain relief. Even those for whom surgery is initially successful may experience a return of pain. That is, surgery is not a successful treatment for many people with chronic back pain (Ehrlich, 2003). Thus, this approach is an expensive but unreliable approach

to controlling this pain syndrome (Turk & McCarberg, 2005). Also, surgery has its own potential dangers and possibilities for complications, which lead many pain patients to behavioral approaches for managing their pain.

Behavioral Techniques for Managing Pain

Psychologists have been prominent in devising therapies that teach people how to manage pain, and several behavioral techniques have proven effective with a variety of pain syndromes. These techniques further highlight the role of psychological factors in the experience of pain, and include relaxation training, behavioral therapy, cognitive therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, and mindfulness. Some authorities consider these techniques to be part of mind–body medicine and thus part of alternative medicine (covered in Chapter 8). Psychologists see these techniques as part of psychology.

Relaxation Training. Relaxation is one approach to managing pain and may be the key ingredient in other types of pain management. *Progressive muscle relaxation* consists of sitting in a comfortable chair with no distractions and then systematic tensing and relaxing of muscle groups throughout the body (Jacobson, 1938). After learning the procedure, people can practice this relaxation technique independently.

Relaxation techniques have been used successfully to treat pain problems such as tension and migraine headache (Fumal & Schoenen, 2008; Penzien, Rains, &

Andrasik, 2002), rheumatoid arthritis (McCallie et al., 2006), and low back pain (Henschke et al., 2010). A National Institutes of Health Technology (NIHT) panel evaluated the evidence for progressive muscle relaxation and gave this technique its highest rating in controlling pain (Lebovits, 2007). However, relaxation training typically functions as part of a multicomponent program (Astin, 2004).

Table 7.1 summarizes the effectiveness of relaxation techniques.

Behavioral Therapy. The most prominent behavioral therapy is *behavior modification*, which arose from the laboratory research on operant conditioning. **Behavior modification** is the process of shaping behavior through the application of operant conditioning principles. The goal of behavior modification is to shape *behavior*, not to alleviate *feelings* or *sensations* of pain. People in pain usually communicate their discomfort to others through their behavior—they complain, moan, sigh, limp, rub, grimace, and miss work.

Wilbert E. Fordyce (1974) was among the first to emphasize the role of operant conditioning in the perpetuation of pain behaviors. He recognized the *reward* value of increased attention and sympathy, financial compensation, and other **positive reinforcers** that frequently follow pain behaviors. These conditions create what pain expert Frank Andrasik (2003) called *pain traps*, which are situations that push people who experience pain toward developing and maintaining chronic pain. The situations that create chronic pain include

TABLE 7.1 Effectiveness of Relaxation Techniques

Problems	Findings	Studies
1. Tension and migraine headaches	Relaxation helps in managing headache.	Fumal & Schoenen, 2008; Penzien et al., 2002
2. Rheumatoid arthritis	Progressive muscle relaxation is an effective component in programs to manage these disorders.	McCallie et al., 2006
3. Low back pain	Relaxation is effective in programs to treat low back pain.	Henschke et al., 2010
4. Variety of chronic pain conditions	Progressive muscle relaxation is effective according to an NIHT review.	Lebovits, 2007

attention from family, relief from normal responsibilities, compensation from employers, and medications that people receive from physicians. These reinforcers make it difficult to get better (Newton-John, 2013).

Behavior modification works against these pain traps, identifying the reinforcers and training people in the patient's environment to use praise and attention to reinforce more desirable behaviors and to withhold reinforcement when the patient exhibits less desired pain behaviors. In other words, the groans and complaints are now ignored, whereas efforts toward greater physical activity and other positive behaviors are reinforced. Objective outcomes indicate progress, such as the amount of medication taken, absences from work, time in bed or off one's feet, number of pain complaints, physical activity, range of motion, and length of sitting tolerance. The strength of the operant conditioning technique is its ability to increase levels of physical activity and decrease the use of medication—two important targets in any pain treatment regimen (Roelofs et al., 2002). In addition, this behavioral approach can decrease pain intensity, reduce disability, and improve quality of life (Gatzounis et al., 2012). The behavior modification approach does not address the cognitions that underlie and contribute to behaviors, but cognitive therapy focuses on these cognitions.

Cognitive therapy is based on the principle that people's beliefs, personal standards, and feelings of self-efficacy strongly affect their behaviors (Bandura, 1986, 2001; Beck, 1976; Ellis, 1962). Cognitive therapies concentrate on techniques designed to change cognitions, assuming that behavior will change when a person alters his or her cognitions. Albert Ellis (1962) argued that thoughts, especially irrational thoughts, are the root of behavior problems. He focused on the tendency to "catastrophize," which escalates an unpleasant situation into something worse. Examples of pain-related catastrophizing might include "This pain will never get better," "I can't go on any longer," or "There is nothing I can do to stop this pain."

The experience of pain can easily turn into a catastrophe, and any exaggeration of feelings of pain can lead to maladaptive behaviors and further exacerbation of irrational beliefs. The tendency to catastrophize is associated with the magnification of pain, both acute (Pavlin, Sullivan, Freund, & Roesen, 2005) and chronic (Karoly & Ruehlman, 2007).

Once irrational cognitions have been identified, the therapist actively attacks these beliefs, with the goal of eliminating or changing them into more rational beliefs. For example, cognitive therapy for pain addresses the tendency to catastrophize, leading people to abandon the belief that their pain is unbearable and will never stop (Thorn & Kuhajda, 2006). Cognitive therapists address these cognitions and work with patients to change them. Rather than concentrate exclusively on thoughts, however, most cognitive therapists working with pain patients address changes in both cognitions and behavior. That is, they practice cognitive behavioral therapy.

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a type of therapy that aims to develop beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and skills to make positive changes in behavior. Like cognitive therapy, CBT assumes that thoughts and feelings are the basis of behavior, so CBT begins with changing attitudes. Like behavior modification, CBT focuses on modifying environmental contingencies and building skills to change observable behavior.

One approach to CBT for pain management is the pain inoculation program designed by Dennis Turk and Donald Meichenbaum (Meichenbaum & Turk, 1976; Turk, 1978, 2001), which is like stress inoculation (explained in Chapter 5). Pain inoculation includes a cognitive stage, the *reconceptualization* stage, during which patients learn to accept the importance of psychological factors for at least some of their pain and often receive an explanation of the gate control theory of pain. The second stage—*acquisition and rehearsal of skills*—includes learning relaxation and controlled breathing skills. The final, or *follow-through*, phase of treatment includes instructions to spouses and other family members to ignore patients' pain behaviors and to reinforce healthy behaviors such as greater levels of physical activity, decreased use of medication, fewer visits to the pain clinic, or an increased number of days at work. With the help of their therapists, patients construct a posttreatment plan for coping with future pain; and finally, they apply their coping skills to everyday situations outside the pain clinic. A study of laboratory-induced pain (Milling, Levine, & Meunier, 2003) indicated that inoculation training was as effective as hypnosis in helping participants control pain. A study of athletes recovering from knee injury (Ross & Berger, 1996) also found that pain inoculation procedures were effective.

Other CBT programs have demonstrated their effectiveness for a wide variety of pain syndromes. CBT includes strategies for addressing the harmful cognitions that are common among chronic pain patients, such as fear and catastrophizing (Leeuw et al., 2007; Thorn et al., 2007) and a behavioral component to help pain patients behave in ways that are compatible with health rather than illness. Evaluations of CBT for low back pain (Hoffman et al., 2007) indicate its effectiveness for this pain syndrome, and studies of CBT with headache patients (Martin, Forsyth, & Reece, 2007; Nash et al., 2004; Thorn et al., 2007) have also demonstrated its benefits. A review of CBT interventions for chronic pain in older adults showed significant improvements in pain, catastrophizing beliefs, and self-efficacy for pain management (Niknejad et al., 2018). Fibromyalgia patients benefited more from CBT than from a drug treatment (García et al., 2006) or any other psychological intervention (Glombiewski et al., 2010), and CBT proved beneficial for people with rheumatoid arthritis (Astin, 2004; Sharpe et al., 2001) as well as cancer and AIDS pain (Breitbart & Payne, 2001). Among adolescents with chronic pain, an internet-delivered CBT intervention improved activity limitations and sleep quality compared to an educational intervention (Palermo et al., 2016).

Recently, researchers evaluated a form of CBT for pain management called **acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)**. ACT encourages pain patients to increase acceptance of their pain, while focusing their attention on other goals and activities that they value. This form of therapy may be especially helpful for chronic pain patients, as attempting to directly control pain may lead to distress and disability (McCracken, Eccleston, & Bell, 2005). A recent meta-analysis of 10 studies of chronic pain patients found that ACT led to significant reduction in pain intensity and improvements in physical functioning compared with a comparison group (Hann & McCracken, 2014). Thus, ACT may be another good alternative to traditional CBT for the management of chronic pain. ACT's focus on acceptance of pain is also a focus of mindfulness-based interventions for chronic pain.

As described in Chapter 5, **mindfulness** is a quality of consciousness or awareness that comes about through intentionally focusing one's attention

on the present moment in a nonjudgmental and accepting manner (Kabat-Zinn, 1994). In the context of chronic pain, a mindfulness-based intervention aims to increase a person's awareness and acceptance of all sensations—even those of pain and physical discomfort—and the emotions that accompany those sensations. Although it may seem odd that deliberately encouraging a person to focus attention on pain could be effective in reducing it, recent evidence suggests that mindfulness works in helping chronic pain patients. A review of studies that compared mindfulness, CBT and usual care for the treatment of chronic pain found that mindfulness was effective in improving physical functioning, pain intensity, as well as depression (Khoo et al., 2019). Furthermore, mindfulness was found to be as effective as CBT. There may be several reasons why mindfulness appears to help people manage their pain. First, mindfulness can help reduce depression and anxiety, and as discussed earlier in this chapter, anxiety increases people's perception of pain. Perhaps more importantly, mindfulness seeks to reduce people's tendency to catastrophize about pain. In a mindfulness-based intervention, people are encouraged to do frequent "body scans" in which they not only pay close attention to the sensations in all parts of their body but are also instructed to attend to them without jumping to judgment about how severe, crippling, or debilitating any pain sensations might be. Such a nonjudgmental approach to attending to pain may make a person realize that their pain occurs less frequently than they typically believe, notice situations that tend to increase or decrease the pain, and also help them refrain from judgments such as "This pain will never go away." Several studies show that mindfulness reduces pain by reducing this tendency toward catastrophizing (Cassidy et al., 2012; Garland et al., 2011). Given the promise and relatively low cost of mindfulness-based interventions for chronic pain, some authorities suggest that such non-pharmacological interventions could be an effective first step in treatment for chronic pain patients (Dowell et al., 2016).

In summary, these studies show that behavior modification, CBT, and mindfulness can be effective interventions for pain management for people with a variety of pain syndromes. These techniques are among the most effective types of pain management strategies. Table 7.2 summarizes the effectiveness of these therapies and the problems they can treat.

TABLE 7.2 Effectiveness of Behavioral, Cognitive, and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Mindfulness

Problems	Findings	Studies
1. Increase in pain behaviors	Verbal reinforcement increases pain behaviors.	Jolliffe & Nicholas, 2004
2. Chronic low back pain	Operant conditioning increases physical activity and lowers medication usage; behavior modification and CBT can also be effective.	Roelofs et al., 2002; Smeets et al., 2009
3. Pain intensity	Behavior modification decreases pain intensity.	Sanders, 2006
4. Catastrophizing the experience of pain	Catastrophizing intensifies acute and chronic pain; CBT reduces catastrophizing.	Karoly & Ruehlman, 2007; Niknejad et al., 2018; Pavlin et al., 2005; Thorn & Kuha-jda, 2006
5. Laboratory-induced pain	Inoculation training was as effective as hypnosis for pain.	Milling et al., 2003
6. Athletes with knee pain	Pain inoculation reduces pain.	Ross & Berger, 1996
7. Low back pain	CBT was evaluated as effective in a meta-analysis and in a systematic review.	Hoffman et al., 2007
8. Headache pain and prevention	CBT is effective in both management and prevention.	Martin et al., 2007; Nash et al., 2004; Thorn et al., 2007
9. Fibromyalgia	CBT is a more effective drug treatment and the most effective psychological intervention.	García et al., 2006; Glombiewski et al., 2010
10. Rheumatoid arthritis	CBT can relieve some pain.	Astin, 2004; Sharpe et al., 2001
11. Cancer and AIDS pain	CBT helps people cope.	Breibart & Payne, 2000
12. Chronic pain	CBT improves activity limitations in adolescents; ACT is effective in reducing pain intensity in two meta-analyses. Mindfulness and CBT are equally effective at reducing pain and improving physical functioning.	Hann & McCracken, 2014; Khoo et al., 2019; Palermo et al., 2016; Veehof et al., 2010

IN SUMMARY

A variety of medical treatments for pain are effective but also have limitations. Analgesic drugs offer pain relief for acute pain and can be of use for chronic pain. These drugs include opiates and nonnarcotic drugs. Opiates are effective in managing severe pain, but their tolerance and dependence properties pose problems for use by chronic pain patients, making health care professionals and patients reluctant to use effective doses. Nonnarcotic drugs such as aspirin, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, and acetaminophen are effective in managing mild to moderate acute pain and have some uses in managing chronic pain.

Surgery can alter either peripheral nerves or the CNS. Surgical procedures are often a last resort in controlling chronic pain, and procedures that involve destruction of nerve pathways are often unsuccessful. Procedures that allow for stimulation of the spinal cord show more promise in pain management, but transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation is not an effective method.

Health psychologists help people cope with stress and chronic pain by using relaxation training, behavioral therapy, cognitive therapy, and CBT. Relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation have demonstrated some success in helping patients manage headache pain, postoperative pain, and low back pain. Behavior modification can

be effective in helping pain patients become more active and decrease their dependence on medication, but this approach does not address the negative emotions and suffering that accompany pain. Cognitive therapy addresses feelings and thus helps in reducing the catastrophizing that exacerbates pain. Combined with the behavioral components of operant conditioning, CBT has demonstrated greater effectiveness than other therapies.

CBT includes pain inoculation therapy, but other combinations of changes in cognitions concerning pain and behavioral strategies for changing pain-related behavior also fit within this category. These approaches have been successful in treating low back pain, headache pain, rheumatoid arthritis

pain, fibromyalgia, and the pain that accompanies cancer and AIDS.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. When would medical approaches to pain management be the most appropriate treatment? When would behavioural approaches be the most appropriate treatment? Some issues to consider are the acute vs. chronic nature of the pain, whether there is obvious tissue damage that can be repaired, risks of addiction to painkillers, and whether a patient shows any psychological factors that may be contributing to their experience of pain.

Questions

This chapter has addressed five basic questions:

1. How does the nervous system register pain?

Receptors near the skin's surface react to stimulation; the nerve impulses from this stimulation relay the message to the spinal cord. The spinal cord includes laminae (layers) that modulate the sensory message and relay it toward the brain. The somatosensory cortex in the brain receives and interprets sensory input. Neurochemicals and the periaqueductal gray can also modulate the information and change the perception of pain.

2. What is the meaning of pain?

Pain is difficult to define, but it can be classified as acute (resulting from specific injury and lasting less than six months), chronic (continuing beyond the time of healing), or prechronic (the critical stage between acute and chronic). The personal experience of pain is affected by situational and cultural factors as well as individual variation and learning history. The meaning of pain can also be understood through theories. The leading model is the gate control theory of pain, which takes both physical and psychological factors into account in the experience of pain.

3. What types of pain present the biggest problems?

Pain syndromes are a common way of classifying chronic pain according to symptoms. These

syndromes include headache pain, low back pain, arthritic pain, cancer pain, and phantom limb pain; the first two are the most common sources of chronic pain and lead to the most time lost from work or school.

4. How can pain be measured?

Pain can be measured physiologically by assessing muscle tension or autonomic arousal, but these measurements do not have high validity. Observations of pain-related behaviors (e.g., limping, grimacing, or complaining) have some reliability and validity. Self-reports are the most common approach to pain measurement; they include rating scales, pain questionnaires, and standardized psychological tests.

5. What techniques are effective for pain management?

The techniques health psychologists use in helping people cope with pain include relaxation training and behavioral techniques. Relaxation training can help people cope with pain problems such as headache and low back pain. Behavioral approaches include behavior modification, which guides people to behave in ways compatible with health rather than pain. Cognitive therapy concentrates on thoughts, guiding pain patients to minimize catastrophizing and fear. Cognitive behavioral therapy combines strategies to change cognitions with behavioral application, which is an especially effective approach for pain control.

Suggested Readings

- Baar, K. (2008, March/April). Pain, pain, go away. *Psychology Today*, 41(2), 56–57. This very brief article provides a summary of psychological factors in pain and the treatments psychologists have used successfully to help people manage pain.
- Gatchel, R., Haggard, R., Thomas, C., & Howard, K. J. (2012). Biopsychosocial approaches to understanding chronic pain and disability. In R. J. Moore (Ed.), *Handbook of pain and palliative care* (pp. 1–16). New York: Springer. This chapter walks the reader through the development of major theories of pain, discusses how acute pain can turn into chronic pain, and presents issues in the assessment and management of chronic pain.

- Kabat-Zinn, J. (2010). Mindfulness meditation for pain relief: Guided practices for reclaiming your body and your life (audio recording). SoundsTrue. This audio recording by Dr. Kabat-Zinn, one of the leading figures in mindfulness research and practice, provides an overview of mindfulness and several approaches for using it to reduce suffering that accompanies experiences of chronic pain.
- Wall, P. (2000). *Pain: The science of suffering*. New York: Columbia University Press. Peter Wall, one of the originators of the gate control theory of pain, tells about his extensive experience in trying to understand this phenomenon. He provides a non-technical examination of the experience of pain, considering the cultural and individual factors that contribute.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>8-1 Define the terms conventional medicine, alternative medicine, complementary medicine, and integrative medicine and give an example of each</p> <p>8-2 Contrast the assumptions that underlie the practice of conventional medicine in the United States with those that underlie traditional Chinese medicine</p> <p>8-3 Compare the philosophy that is the basis of traditional Chinese medicine with Ayurvedic medicine</p> <p>8-4 Contrast natural products and drugs by describing of the origins of each</p> <p>8-5 Contrast natural products and drugs by evaluating the effectiveness of each</p> <p>8-6 Contrast natural products and drugs by evaluating of risks of each</p> <p>8-7 Analyze the recent popular diet plans (i.e., Atkins, DASH, etc.) designed to improve health, focusing on the effectiveness and safety of these diets</p> <p>8-8 Describe two differences between chiropractic manipulation and massage therapy in terms of both the conceptualization of problems and the practice of each therapy</p> <p>8-9 Contrast transcendental and mindfulness meditation, pointing out both the similarities and the differences.</p> <p>8-10 Contrast the practice of yoga with the practice of tai chi, explaining the origins, popularity, and types of movements involved in each</p> | <p>8-11 Explain how gaining control over autonomic processes could benefit individuals who experience chronic stress, high blood pressure, and migraine headaches</p> <p>8-12 Describe two characteristics that make hypnosis different from other mental states</p> <p>8-13 Trace the increase of CAM usage in the United States over the past 20 years</p> <p>8-14 Analyze the influence of culture and geography in the acceptance and use of CAM</p> <p>8-15 Describe two personal factors that increase the likelihood of CAM use</p> <p>8-16 Describe the challenges that CAM researchers face in establishing the effectiveness of alternative medicine treatments</p> <p>8-17 Evaluate the evidence for the effectiveness of meditation, movement-based practices, and acupuncture as treatment for stress and anxiety</p> <p>8-18 Evaluate the evidence for the effectiveness of meditation, acupuncture, massage, chiropractic treatments, biofeedback, and hypnosis as pain treatments</p> <p>8-19 Describe three limitations to CAM use.</p> <p>8-20 Explain how integrative medicine attempts to create a system with "the best of both worlds"</p> |
|--|--|

CHAPTER 8

Considering Alternative Approaches

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of T. R. Reid

- Alternative Medical Systems

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Ayurvedic Medicine

- Alternative Products and Diets
- Manipulative Practices

Chiropractic Treatment

Massage

- Mind–Body Medicine

Meditation and Yoga

Qi Gong and Tai Chi

Biofeedback

Hypnotic Treatment

Physiology and Mind–Body Medicine

- Who Uses Complementary and Alternative Medicine?

Culture, Ethnicity, and Gender

Motivations for Seeking Alternative Treatment

- How Effective Are Alternative Treatments?

Alternative Treatments for Anxiety, Stress, and Depression

Alternative Treatments for Pain

Alternative Treatments for Other Conditions

Limitations of Alternative Therapies

Integrative Medicine

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on six questions:

1. What are some alternatives to conventional medicine?
2. What products and diets count as alternative medicine?
3. What manipulative practices fall within alternative practices?
4. What is mind–body medicine?
5. Who uses complementary and alternative medicine?
6. What are the effective uses and limitations of alternative treatments?

The biopsychosocial model is an expansion of the biomedical view, but other conceptualizations of illness differ so much from mainstream medicine that they fall into another category. **Alternative medicine** is the term applied to this group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not currently part of conventional medicine (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health [NCCIH], 2008/2018). Alternatives to conventional medicine come from systems of medicine that arose in different cultures, such as traditional Chinese medicine; from practices that are not yet accepted in mainstream medicine, such as yoga and massage therapy; and from products that are not yet recognized as having medicinal value, such as glucosamine or melatonin.

People may use these practices and products as alternatives to conventional medicine—for example, when a person seeks acupuncture or massage therapy for back pain rather than take an analgesic drug. However, people usually combine alternative with conventional treatments (Clarke et al., 2015). In such circumstances, the term **complementary medicine** applies—for example, when a person uses both massage and analgesic drugs to control pain. The group of systems, practices, and products is often termed *complementary and alternative medicine* (CAM). However, the ideal situation for many practitioners and patients would be a mixture of both conventional and alternative approaches, which constitutes **integrative medicine** (or *integrative health*). We will return to this goal later but will first examine the systems that originated many alternative approaches.



Check **YOUR HEALTH CARE PREFERENCES** About Health Research

Check the items that are consistent with your beliefs.

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. When I am in pain, I go to the medicine cabinet to find something to alleviate my pain. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. I believe that herbal treatments can be as effective as drugs in treating pain. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Drug companies should develop a pill to help people deal with stress. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Stress and pain arise from sources outside of the person. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. If my pain did not respond to medical treatment, I would be willing to try some alternative approach such as hypnosis or acupuncture. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Too many people take drugs to help them cope with their problems. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. I would prefer some alternative to medical treatments for stress and pain problems. <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Stress and pain come from an interaction of the person and the situation. <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Chiropractic care offers no real benefits. <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Alternative treatments cannot be as effective as conventional medical treatments. <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Alternative treatments are safer than conventional medical approaches. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 12. I believe that a combination of alternative and conventional medical treatments offers the best approach for pain management. |
|---|--|--|

If you agreed with items 1, 3, 4, 9, and 10, then you probably have a strong belief in conventional medical approaches to treatment, including treatments for stress and pain problems. If you agreed with items 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, and 12, then you show some beliefs that are compatible with alternative and behavioral treatments.

This chapter examines alternative treatments, describes alternative approaches to managing stress and pain, and reviews evidence about the effectiveness of these approaches.

8-1 Alternative Medical Systems

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 8-1** Define the terms conventional medicine, alternative medicine, complementary medicine, and integrative medicine and give an example of each
- 8-2** Contrast the assumptions that underlie the practice of conventional medicine in the United States with those that underlie traditional Chinese medicine
- 8-3** Compare the philosophy that is the basis of traditional Chinese medicine with Ayurvedic medicine

The classification of procedures and products as complementary or alternative depends not only on the cultural context but also on the time period. In the United States 150 years ago, surgery was an alternative treatment not well accepted by established medicine (Weitz, 2010). As

surgical techniques improved and evidence began to accumulate that surgery was the best treatment for some conditions, it became part of conventional medicine. More recently, when evidence about the health value of high-fiber diets began to accumulate, the value of whole-grain diets made the transition from alternative medicine to mainstream medical recommendation (Hufford, 2003). Some of the techniques now classified as CAM will, with research and time, become part of conventional medicine.

Making the transition from CAM to conventional medicine requires demonstration of the effectiveness of the procedure or substance through scientific research (Berman & Straus, 2004; Committee on the Use of Complementary and Alternative Medicine, 2005). To assist this process, the U.S. Congress created an agency that became the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine, and then in 2014, the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health. Beginning in 1992, this agency has sponsored research on CAM in an attempt to determine which approaches are effective for what conditions, as well as who uses CAM and for what conditions. Before considering the findings on CAM approaches for stress management, pain, and other conditions, we



Real-World Profile of T. R. REID



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T. R. Reid's career as a journalist took him to countries around the world, where he became interested in the politics and health care systems of those countries (Zuger, 2009). Reid pursued his interest in health care systems, which resulted in documentary films and books, including *"The Healing of America: A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care,"* which became a bestseller.

As part of his examination of health care around the world, Reid also pursued a personal health question about his shoulder pain. Reid had sustained a serious shoulder injury when he was in the Navy (National Public Radio, 2009). The repair was fine for 30 years but began to bother him, so Reid blended his inquiries about health care systems with personal inquiries about treatments for his shoulder. In the United States, he consulted an orthopedic surgeon, who told him to have shoulder replacement surgery. The provider whom he interviewed in France also told him that surgery was his best option. In England, he consulted a physician with the National Health, Great Britain's comprehensive government-supported medical system. That physician told him that he was not eligible for surgery because his level of disability was not severe enough to warrant that level of treatment; he was eligible for physical therapy, which might help with the pain but would not cure his problem.

Reid also consulted a physician in Japan, who explained that Reid had a variety of treatment options, including the surgery that his U.S. and French orthopedic surgeons recommended but also steroid injections and some options from traditional Chinese medicine. One of those options was acupuncture, which Reid tried but received no relief from his shoulder pain. Reid also consulted a practitioner in India, who recommended treatment from Ayurvedic medicine, a traditional medical practice that arose in India about 3,000 years ago. This course of treatment included massages with warm oil; this treatment improved Reid's shoulder pain and increased the range of movement of his arm.

Reid's medical journey included several types of medicine that fit within conventional medicine. The recommendations for surgery and medications fit within the tradition of medicine that follows the biomedical model of disease, which is based on the concept of pathogens as the underlying cause of disease. The biomedical model dominates medical care in the United States and many other countries. However, the Ayurvedic approach that worked for Reid's shoulder pain is outside conventional medicine in the United States and constitutes an example of alternative medicine.

will review some of the major CAM approaches and techniques.

The health care that most people receive in North America, Europe, and other places around the world comes from physicians, surgeons, nurses, and pharmacists representing the biomedical medicine system. Various alternative systems have arisen at different times and places; some have evolved during the same time frame as Western conventional medicine (NCCIH, 2008/2018). Each of these alternative systems includes a complete theory of disease (and possibly of health as well) and a description of what constitutes appropriate medical practice. In the United States, over

20% of people have used a treatment based on at least one of these systems (Clarke et al., 2018).

Traditional Chinese Medicine

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) originated in China at least 2,000 years ago (Xutian et al., 2009) and remains a major treatment approach in Asian countries, as T. R. Reid found in his exploration of worldwide medical care. The TCM system holds that a vital force, called *qi* (pronounced "chee" and sometimes written as *chi*), animates the body. Qi flows through channels in the body called *meridians*, which connect

parts of the body to each other and to the universe as a whole. Keeping the qi in balance is important to maintaining and restoring health. If the qi is blocked or becomes stagnant, health impairment and disease can develop.

The body exists in a balance between two opposing energies or forces, yin and *yang* (Xutian et al., 2009). Yin represents cold, passive, and slow energy; yang is hot, active, and rapid. The two always operate together, achieving a balance between the two is essential for health; attaining harmony is ideal. Imbalances may occur through physical, emotional, or environmental events, and thus, TCM takes a holistic approach to diagnosis and treatment. Practitioners have a variety of techniques to help individuals revitalize and unblock qi, bring yin and yang into balance, and restore health. These techniques include acupuncture, massage, herbal preparations, diet, and exercise.

Acupuncture became the first component of TCM to gain widespread publicity in the West in 1971, when *New York Times* journalist James Reston experienced and reported on the acupuncture treatment he received in China (Harrington, 2008). Reston had accompanied Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to China as Kissinger worked toward a meeting between Chinese leader Mao Tse-tung and U.S. president Richard Nixon, who wanted to establish diplomatic relations with China. Reston's story about the success of acupuncture in controlling his postoperative pain captured the interest of many people and led the way toward acupuncture becoming well known as an alternative treatment. Acupuncture holds an important place in the system of TCM.

Acupuncture consists of inserting needles into specific points on the skin and stimulating the needles continuously (NCCIH, 2007/2016a). The stimulation can be accomplished electrically or by twirling the needles. About 1.5% of people in the United States reported that they have used acupuncture (Clarke et al., 2015). T. R. Reid tried acupuncture for his shoulder pain but received no relief from this technique (National Public Radio, 2009).

Acupressure is a manipulative technique that involves the application of pressure rather than needles to the points used in acupuncture. In the system of TCM, acupuncture and acupressure help to unblock the flow of qi and thus restore health. Another strategy for stimulating or subduing qi is a massage technique called *tui na*. TCM holds that this process regulates the nervous system, boosts immune function, and helps flush wastes out of the system.



Acupuncture originated within traditional Chinese medicine and has become a popular alternative treatment.

The Chinese *Materia Medica* is a reference guide to the use of herbs and herbal preparations in treatment. Herbs such as ginseng and ginger are common, but many other plant, mineral, and even animal preparations are part of herbal remedies. The ingredients are ground into a powder and either made into tea or formed into pills. These preparations have a long history in TCM, but recent interest has focused on evaluation of these substances using chemical analysis and randomized controlled trials to establish their efficacy and safety. Some advocates believe that ingredients in these traditional preparations may be useful in formulating new drugs (Fan et al., 2019).

Diet and exercise are also part of TCM. Rather than aiming for a diet with a balance of carbohydrates, protein, and fats, TCM-based recommendations strive to remedy imbalances in yin and yang by eating certain foods and avoiding others (Xutian et al., 2009). The exercise with therapeutic properties is *qi gong*, which consists of a series of movements and breathing techniques that help with the circulation of qi.

The practices of acupuncture and qi gong, as well as products such as herbal preparations, are used as alternative treatments for specific problems in many cultures. However, TCM consists of an integrated theory of health and practice of medicine. Ayurveda is another system of medicine that emphasizes balance.

Ayurvedic Medicine

Ayurveda, or Ayurvedic medicine, is an ancient system that arose in India; the first written texts appeared more than 2,000 years ago (NCCIH, 2005/2019). The

term originated in two Sanskrit words, the combination of which means “science of life.” The goal of Ayurvedic medicine is to integrate and balance the body, mind, and spirit. These three elements are believed to be an extension of the relationship among all things in the universe. Humans are born in a state of balance, but events can disrupt this balance. When these elements are out of balance, the imbalance endangers health; bringing them back into balance restores health.

Ayurvedic practitioners diagnose patients through examinations that include observation of physical characteristics as well as questions about lifestyle and behavior (NCCIH, 2005/2019). Formulating a treatment plan may require consultation with family members as well as the patient. The goals of treatment are to eliminate impurities and to increase harmony and balance, which are achieved through changes to exercise and diet. These changes may include yoga exercises and special diets or fasting to eliminate impurities in the body. Massage to vital points on the body is also part of Ayurvedic medicine, which provides pain relief and improves circulation. The use of herbs, medicated oils, spices, and minerals is extensive, yielding more than 5,000 products.

Ayurvedic medicine was another type of treatment that T. R. Reid tried to improve his shoulder pain (Zunger, 2009). After a diagnostic process that

included something reminiscent of an astrology reading, Reid entered a treatment center. His regimen included a special diet, meditation, and a series of massages with warm oil. Somewhat to his surprise, this treatment was successful; his shoulder pain improved substantially.

Patients may also receive directions to change behaviors to reduce worry and increase harmony in their lives; yoga practice is part of this element. Less than 1% of people in the United States have sought Ayurvedic treatment, making it much less common than TCM (Clarke et al., 2015). However, 14.3% of adults (Clarke et al., 2018) and 8.4% of children (Black et al., 2018) in the United States have practiced yoga. **Table 8.1** presents elements of TCM and Ayurvedic medicine, which show similarities in underlying philosophy and differences in terminology of these two systems.

Other alternative medical systems include *naturopathy* and *homeopathy*; both arose during the 19th century in Europe and spread to North America. Each became prominent and then faded from popularity with the rise of conventional medicine. In the United States, homeopathic treatment is more common (2.2%) than naturopathic treatment (0.5%; Clarke et al., 2015), which means that neither system experiences widespread use in the United States.

TABLE 8.1 Elements of Traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic Medicine

Traditional Chinese Medicine	Ayurvedic Medicine
Basic Philosophy	
Life force (qi/chi) flows through the body along meridians and must be balanced to maintain health.	Health is achieved by a balance of body, mind, and spirit.
Origin of Disease	
There is blockage of the flow of qi.	Life circumstances and events can produce impurities and imbalances among body, mind, and spirit.
Treatments	
Exercise, including qi gong and tai chi	Exercise, including yoga
Changes to diet to balance the forces of yin and yang by eating certain foods and avoiding others	Changes to diet, including fasting or special diets
Acupuncture or acupressure to relieve pain	Massage to relieve pain and improve circulation
Tui na massage to regulate the nervous system, increase immune function, and eliminate wastes	
Preparations with herbs	Preparations with herbs, oils, spices, or minerals

IN SUMMARY

Alternative medicine consists of a group of health care systems, practices, and products that are not currently part of conventional medicine but that people use rather than (alternative medicine) or along with conventional treatments (complementary medicine).

Alternative health care systems include traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), Ayurvedic medicine, naturopathy, and homeopathy. TCM and Ayurvedic medicine are ancient; naturopathy and homeopathy arose in the 19th century. Each of these systems presents a theory of health and disease, as well as practices for diagnosis and treatment.

TCM holds that the body contains a vital energy called qi; keeping this energy in balance is essential to health. Techniques such as acupuncture and acupressure, herbal remedies, massage (called *tui na*), and the energy-channeling practices of qi gong and tai chi are aimed at achieving this balance. Ayurvedic medicine accepts the notion of vital energy and holds that the integration of body, mind, and spirit is essential to health. Diet and herbal preparations are part of Ayurvedic medicine and so is exercise, including yoga.

Naturopathy and homeopathy were prominent treatments 100 years ago in the United States, but their popularity declined and has not rebounded.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. You tell your friend that you are intrigued by some alternative medicine treatments, but your friend says that alternative medicine is a group of quack remedies that only poorly educated people and immigrants from other countries practice. Outline a counterargument to your friend's view, citing information from NCCIH.

8-2 Alternative Products and Diets

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 8-4 Contrast natural products and drugs by describing the origins of each
- 8-5 Contrast natural products and drugs by evaluating the effectiveness of each

- 8-6 Contrast natural products and drugs by evaluating of risks of each

- 8-7 Analyze the recent popular diet plans (i.e., Atkins, DASH, etc.) designed to improve health, focusing on the effectiveness and safety of these diets

The practice of supplementing the diet to improve health is ancient, originating in many cultures and variations dating back thousands of years. Currently, millions of people take vitamin and mineral supplements to preserve their health and to promote wellness, often at the suggestion of a physician or other conventional health practitioner. Thus, that practice falls within the category of conventional treatment, but some natural products are classified as alternative treatments. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration regulates natural products as food rather than as drugs. Thus, the sale of such products is without restriction, without evaluations of effectiveness, but includes evaluations of safety (NCCIH, 2009/2019).

The category of natural products includes a variety of supplements, probiotics, and functional foods. Natural product supplements include omega-3 fatty acid supplements for reducing the risks of cardiovascular disease, which is the most commonly used product in this category. Other products include echinacea as a treatment for colds and flu, glucosamine for osteoarthritis, melatonin to promote sleep, and many others. *Probiotics* consist of live microorganisms that occur naturally in the digestive tract that people take to enhance digestion or to remedy digestive problems. The most common example of a probiotic is yogurt cultured with live bacteria. People also try to maintain or enhance their health by supplementing their diets with a wide variety of herbs, amino acids, extracts, special foods, and other natural products. *Functional foods* are components of a normal diet that have biologically active components, such as soy, chocolate, cranberries, and other foods containing antioxidants.

Dietary supplement sales amount to billions of dollars each year in the United States, and supplements are among the most widely used types of alternative medicine. **Table 8.2** presents the frequency of use of supplements for adults and children in the United States.

Diet is an important factor in health, and some people follow specific diet plans to improve their health (rather than—or in addition to—losing weight). Such diets include vegetarian, macrobiotic, Atkins, Ornish,

TABLE 8.2 Most Frequently Used CAM Products

Product or Diet	Percentage of Adults Who Used This Approach	Percentage of Children (<18 years) Who Used This Approach
Nonvitamin/nonmineral supplement	17.7	4.9
Fish oil	7.8	—
Glucosamine or chondroitin	2.6	—
Probiotics	1.6	—
Melatonin	1.3	—
Echinacea	0.9	—
Diet-based therapies	3.0	0.7

Sources: Data from “Use of complementary health approaches among children aged 4–17 years in the United States: National Health Interview Survey, 2007–2012,” by L. I. Black, T. C. Clarke, P. M. Barnes, B. J. Stussman, R. L. Nahin, 2015, *National Health Statistics Reports*, no. 78, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics; and “Trends in the use of complementary health approaches among adults: United States, 2002–2012,” by T. C. Clarke, L. I. Black, B. J. Stussman, P. M. Barnes, & R. L. Nahin, 2015, *National Health Statistics Reports*, no. 79, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.

Zone, and the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet.

All vegetarian diets restrict meat and fish and focus on vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes, seeds, and plant-based oils. However, varieties of vegetarian diets include lactovegetarian, which allows dairy products; ovo-lacto vegetarian, which allows dairy products and eggs; and vegan diets, which allow neither dairy products nor eggs. Diets that restrict meat and meat products tend to be lower in fat and higher in fiber than other diets, which make them beneficial for people with health problems such as high cholesterol levels. The American Heart Association and the American Cancer Society have recommended limiting meat consumption for health reasons. All three varieties of vegetarian diets can furnish adequate nutrition for people in all stages of development, but vegetarians must plan their meals carefully to assure that they receive adequate protein, calcium, and other nutrients that are plentiful in meat (Phillips, 2005). Those who follow very restrictive vegetarian diets, such as a *macrobiotic diet*, must be more careful than other vegetarians to obtain adequate nutrients. This vegetarian diet plan is not only largely vegetarian but also restricts food choices to grains, cereals, cooked vegetables, and an occasional, limited amount of fruit and fish.

The Atkins, Pritikin, Ornish, and Zone diets vary in terms of the amount of carbohydrates and fats allowed and vary in their overall goals (Gardner et al., 2007). For example, the Atkins diet program limits carbohydrates,

but not fat or calories, whereas the Ornish program strives to limit fat intake to 10% of calories, which makes this diet almost entirely vegetarian, difficult to follow, and thus rarely followed (Clarke et al., 2015). The DASH diet focuses on vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products and limits red meat, sugar, and sodium intake. This diet is less restrictive and thus easier to follow.

Special diets to promote health are not a common practice; most people who follow a restrictive diet have the goal of losing weight. As Table 8.2 shows, only 3% of people in the United States follow one of these special diets, a number that has decreased over the past 15 years (Clarke et al., 2015).

IN SUMMARY

Alternative products include dietary supplements; specialized diets are an alternative procedure. People are more likely to supplement their diets with a wide variety of vitamins, minerals, and natural products such as herbs, amino acids, extracts, and special foods to improve health or to treat specific conditions. This approach has become the most commonly used alternative medicine in the United States. Some special diets have the goal of lowering cholesterol levels, such as the Ornish diet, the South Beach diet, or the Zone diet; other diets have the goal of improving health, such as the DASH

diet, vegetarian diets, and macrobiotic diet. Following a special diet is less common (3%) than using a dietary supplement (17.7%).

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Research three products within the category of alternative products, listing the benefits claimed for these products and the risks that may be associated with their use.
2. Keep a weeklong food diary to provide you with data to analyze your diet. With these data, choose a healthy diet from those described in this section and point out the differences between your diet and this healthy diet.

8-3 Manipulative Practices

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- 8-8** Describe two differences between chiropractic manipulation and massage therapy in terms of both the conceptualization of problems and the practice of each therapy

Manipulative practices consist of practices oriented toward symptom relief or treatment of disease conditions. The most common are chiropractic treatment and massage. Chiropractic focuses on spinal alignment and the joints, using adjustment techniques to bring the spine back into alignment. Massage is also a manipulation technique, but massage focuses on the soft tissue. Several different types of massage exist, but many share the underlying premise that this type of manipulation helps the body to heal itself.

Chiropractic Treatment

Daniel David Palmer founded chiropractic in 1895 (NCCIH, 2007/2012). Palmer believed that manipulation of the spine was the key not only to curing illness but also to preventing it. That focus forms the basis for chiropractic care—performing adjustments to the spine and joints to correct misalignments that underlie health problems. Chiropractic adjustments involve applying pressure with the hands or with a machine that forces

a joint to move beyond its passive range of motion. Chiropractors may also use heat, ice, and electric stimulation as part of treatment; they may also prescribe exercise for rehabilitation, dietary changes, or dietary supplements. With these problems corrected, the body can heal itself.

Palmer founded the first chiropractic school in 1896, and chiropractic began to spread in the United States during the early 20th century (Pettman, 2007). Students gain admission into schools of chiropractic training after completing at least 90 hours in science-focused undergraduate college courses (NCCIH, 2007/2012). Chiropractic training requires an additional four years of study in one of the schools accredited by the Council of Chiropractic Education. The program involves coursework and patient care. All 50 states of the United States license chiropractors after they finish their course of study and undergo board examinations.

Almost from the beginning of chiropractic, physicians attacked the practice, initiating prosecutions against chiropractors for practicing medicine without a license (Pettman, 2007). The American Medical Association waged a bitter battle against chiropractic throughout the mid-20th century, but the chiropractors prevailed. The rivalry has eased; chiropractic care has become the most common of alternative treatments that physician recommend (Stussman et al., 2020); it has become so well accepted that it is in the process of becoming integrated into conventional medicine. For example, requests by athletes for chiropractic treatment have encouraged its integration into sport medicine (Theberge, 2008), and chiropractic treatment is also available for clients served through the U.S. Department of Defense and the Department of Veterans Affairs, either through Veteran's Hospitals or through contracts with private providers (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d.). Indeed, chiropractic treatment has become so well accepted that many insurance plans pay for these services. Back pain, neck pain, and headache pain are the most common conditions that prompt people to seek chiropractic treatment (NCCIH, 2007/2012). Table 8.3 shows the frequency of seeking chiropractic care in the United States for children as well as adults; the percentage is somewhat higher for Canadian adults, where 11% used chiropractic within the year before the survey (Park, 2005).

Massage

Chiropractic manipulation focuses on the spine and joints, but massage manipulates soft tissues to produce

health benefits. Considered a luxury until recently, massage is now recognized as an alternative therapy used to control stress and pain. This approach dates back thousands of years and arose in many cultures (Moyer, Rounds, & Hannum, 2004). Records of massage date back to 2000 bce, and early healers such as Hippocrates and Galen wrote about its benefits. **Table 8.3** presents the percentage of adults and children in the United States who have used massage for health benefits.

Several different types of therapeutic massage exist. Although Per Henrik Ling is often credited, it was Johann Mezger who developed the massage techniques during the 19th century that became known as *Swedish massage* (Pettman, 2007). This type of massage achieves relaxation by using light strokes in one direction combined with kneading muscles using deeper pressure in the opposite direction (NCCIH, 2006/2019). Originally part of physical therapy and rehabilitation, massage is now an effective therapy for stress, anxiety, problems related to aging, hypertension, and various types of pain (Field, 2016).

Other types of massage come from other systems of medicine, including TCM, Ayurveda, and naturopathy. Acupressure and *tui na* are both manipulative techniques originating in TCM (Xue et al., 2010). Acupressure involves the application of pressure to meridians on the body, with the goal of unblocking the flow of qi. *Shiatsu massage* is the Japanese counterpart of acupressure. *Tui na* is another approach from TCM for helping the qi flow freely throughout the body. It may involve pushing the qi along specific meridians using one finger or thumb, which is also similar to *shiatsu* massage. The rationale for Ayurvedic massage holds that manipulating specific points on the body will channel healing energy within the body. Its practice often involves medicinal oils to decrease friction and to help with the healing, which was the technique that had substantial benefits to T. R. Reid’s shoulder. Thus, the practice of massage is common in CAM, arising from several systems and used as an independent healing practice.

TABLE 8.3 Most Frequently Used Manipulative Practices

Manipulative Practices	Percentage of Adults Who Used This Approach	Percentage of Children (<18 years) Who Used This Approach
Chiropractic manipulation	10.3	3.4
Massage	6.9	0.7

Source: Data from “Use of complementary health approaches among children aged 4–17 years in the United States: National Health Interview Survey, 2007–2012,” by L. I. Black, T. C. Clarke, P. M. Barnes, B. J. Stussman, R. L. Nahin, 2015, *National Health Statistics Reports*, no. 78, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics; and “Trends in the use of complementary health approaches among adults: United States, 2002–2012,” by T. C. Clarke, L. I. Black, B. J. Stussman, P. M. Barnes, & R. L. Nahin, 2015, *National Health Statistics Reports*, no. 79, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.



APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. You notice that your roommate seems to be taking a lot of aspirin, ask why, and learn that your roommate is experiencing persistent shoulder pain. You suggest trying chiropractic treatments, but your roommate says that massages sound more appealing. Make a list of the symptoms that are important to know before you can both agree which treatment is a better choice.

IN SUMMARY

Manipulative practices include chiropractic treatments and massage. Chiropractic focuses on spinal alignment and the joints, using adjustment techniques to bring the spine back into alignment. Massage is also a manipulation technique, but massage focuses on the soft tissue. Several different types of massage exist, but many share the underlying premise that this type of manipulation helps the body to heal itself.

8-4 Mind–Body Medicine

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 8-9** Contrast transcendental and mindfulness meditation, pointing out both the similarities and the differences
- 8-10** Contrast the practice of yoga with the practice of tai chi, explaining the origins, popularity, and types of movements involved in each
- 8-11** Explain how gaining control over autonomic processes could benefit individuals who experience chronic stress, high blood pressure, and migraine headaches
- 8-12** Describe two characteristics that make hypnosis different from other mental states

Mind–body medicine. It is the term applied to a variety of techniques based on the notion that the brain, mind, body, and behavior interact in complex ways and that emotional, mental, social, and behavioral factors exert important effects on health (NCCIH, 2017). Some

of these techniques are associated with psychology and some with conventional medicine, but all share the notion that mind and body represent a holistic system of dynamic interactions. This conception is not recent; it forms the basis for TCM, Ayurvedic medicine, and many other systems of traditional and folk medicine. This notion was also prominent in Europe until the 17th century, when French philosopher René Descartes proposed that the mind and the body work according to different principles. Descartes's pronouncement promoted the view that the body functions according to mechanistic principles, which was important in the development of Western medicine but discounted the importance of the mind in physical health.

Those who accept mind–body medicine seek to understand the interaction of mind and body and its relationship to health. Some of the techniques of mind–body medicine come from those systems that propose a holistic view, such as TCM and Ayurvedic medicine. However, the techniques include not only meditation, tai chi, qi gong, and yoga, which arose within those systems of medicine, but also guided imagery, hypnosis, and biofeedback. A component that is common to most of these practices is deep, controlled breathing, but many people in the United States use deep-breathing exercises alone rather than as a part of other mind–body techniques (Clarke et al., 2015). Table 8.4 shows the frequency of this and other mind–body practices among U.S. adults and children.

Meditation and Yoga

Most approaches to meditation originated in Asia as part of religious practices, but the mind–body approaches to meditation typically have no religious connotations (NCCIH, 2007/2016b). Many variations of meditation exist, but all involve a quiet location, a specific posture, a focus of attention, and an open attitude. Table 8.4 shows the use of meditation among adults and children in the United States. The two most prominent types of meditation are transcendental meditation and mindfulness meditation.

Transcendental Meditation. Transcendental meditation originated in the Vedic tradition in India. Participants who practice this type of meditation usually sit with their eyes closed and their muscles relaxed. They then focus attention on their breathing and silently repeat a sound, such as “om” or any other personally meaningful word or phrase, with each breath for about 20 minutes. Repeating the single word is intended

TABLE 8.4 Most Frequently Used CAM Therapies

Mind–Body Approaches	Percentage of Adults Who Used This Approach	Percentage of Children (<18 years) Who Used This Approach
Deep breathing	10.9	2.7
Meditation	14.2	5.4
Guided imagery	1.7	0.4
Yoga	14.3	8.4
Tai chi	1.1	0.2
Qi gong	0.3	0.1
Biofeedback	0.1	<0.1
Hypnosis	0.1	—

Source: Data from “Use of complementary health approaches among children aged 4–17 years in the United States: National Health Interview Survey, 2007–2012,” by L. I. Black, T. C. Clarke, P. M. Barnes, B. J. Stussman, R. L. Nahin, 2015, *National Health Statistics Reports*, no. 78, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics; and “Trends in the use of complementary health approaches among adults: United States, 2002–2012,” by T. C. Clarke, L. I. Black, B. J. Stussman, P. M. Barnes, & R. L. Nahin, 2015, *National Health Statistics Reports*, no. 79, Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics.



BECOMING HEALTHIER

One technique that helps people manage and minimize pain is guided imagery. This technique involves creating an image and being guided (or guiding yourself) through it. The process can be helpful in dealing with both chronic pain and acute pain, such as medical or dental procedures. Those who are not experienced at guided imagery will benefit from having a recorded version of the guided imagery instructions, for which you can find an app.

To practice guided imagery, choose a quiet, comfortable place where you will not be disturbed. Prepare for the experience by placing the recording where you can turn it on, seating yourself in a comfortable chair, and taking a few deep breaths. Turn on the player, close your eyes, and follow the instructions.

The instructions should include a description of a special place, one that you either imagine or have experienced, where you feel safe and at peace. Tailor the place to fit with your life and experiences—one person's magic place may not be so attractive to another person, so think about what appeals to you. Many people enjoy a beach scene, but others like woods, fields, or special rooms. The goal is to imagine somewhere that you will feel relaxed and at peace.

Put instructions on your recording concerning this place and its description. Spend time in this place and experience it in detail. Pay attention to the sights and sounds, but do not neglect the smells and skin senses associated with the place. Spend time imagining each of these sensory experiences and include instructions

to yourself about the feelings. You should feel relaxed and peaceful as you go through this scene. Linger over the details and allow yourself to become completely absorbed in the experience.

Make sure to include some instructions for relaxed breathing in your tour of your special place. Your goal is to achieve peace and relaxation that will replace the anxiety and pain that you have felt. As you repeat the guided imagery exercise, you may want to revise the instructions to include more details. The recording should include at least 10 minutes of guided instructions, and your experience and practice may lead you to lengthen it. Eventually, you will not need the recording, and you will be able to use this technique wherever you go.

to prevent distracting thoughts and to sustain muscle relaxation. Meditation requires a conscious motivation to focus attention on a single thought or image along with effort not to be distracted by other thoughts.

Mindfulness Meditation. Mindfulness meditation has roots in ancient Buddhist practice (Bodhi, 2011) but after some adaptations became a modern stress reduction practice. In mindfulness meditation, people usually sit in a relaxed, upright posture and focus on any thoughts or sensations as they occur, trying to enhance their own awareness of their perceptions and thought processes in a nonjudgmental way (Kabat-Zinn, 1993). If unpleasant thoughts or sensations occur, meditators are encouraged not to ignore them but to let them pass and to concentrate on the breath. By noting thoughts objectively, without censoring or editing them, people can gain insight into how they see the world and what motivates them.

Jon Kabat-Zin (1993) adapted mindfulness meditation into a program of stress reduction. This procedure involves an eight-week course of training, which typically occurs for at least two hours per day and may also include an intensive retreat to develop meditation skills. Mindfulness-based stress reduction is useful in a wide variety of settings to help people control anxiety and manage chronic disease and pain conditions. Systematic review and meta-analysis (Goyal et al., 2014) indicated that this approach showed a moderate-sized effect in helping people manage anxiety, depression, and pain. Research on mindfulness over the past 20 years has revealed the usefulness of this approach, including boosting the effectiveness of the immune system (Creswell, 2017).

Guided Imagery. Guided imagery shares some elements with meditation, but there are important differences. In guided imagery, people conjure up a calm, peaceful image, such as the repetitive rhythmic roar of an ocean or the quiet beauty of an outdoor scene. They then concentrate on that image for the duration of a situation, often one that is painful or anxiety-provoking. The assumption underlying guided imagery is that a person cannot concentrate on more than one thing at a time. Therefore, imagining an especially powerful or peaceful scene will divert attention from the painful experience (see Becoming Healthier box). Table 8.4 shows how uncommon guided imagery practice is.

Yoga. Yoga has its origins in ancient India (refer back to Table 8.1) but is now part of mind–body practice (NCCIH, 2008/2019). It includes physical postures,

breathing, and meditation, and its goal is to balance body, mind, and spirit. Of the various schools of yoga, *Hatha yoga* is the most common in the United States and Europe. The many postures of yoga furnish ways to move and concentrate energy in the body. This concentration of attention on the body permits people to ignore other situations and problems and to live in their bodies in the moment. The controlled breathing fosters relaxation. Table 8.4 shows that yoga is among the more common mind–body practices among both adults and children.

Qi Gong and Tai Chi

TCM includes movement-based approaches to unblock qi and improve health. The basic technique is *qi gong* (also written as *qigong*, *chi gung*, and *chi gong*), which consists of a series of exercises or movements intended to concentrate and balance the body's vital energy (Sancier & Holman, 2004). Its practice promotes relaxation and provides exercise. Tai chi, or *tai chi chuan*, originated as one of the martial arts but evolved into a set of movements used for therapeutic benefits (Gallagher, 2003).

Qi Gong. Qi gong involves the practice or cultivation (gong) of the qi (energy) by postures and simple movements that channel vital energy and restore balance in the body. It is one of the basic practices of TCM (Twicken, 2011). One way to view qi gong is as “the manipulation of the regulation of the body, breath, and mind into an integrative whole, with the breath as the key regulator practice to make this happen” (Shinnick, 2006, p. 351). These postures and movements may be practiced individually or integrated into a sequence called a *form*. Within TCM, the practice of qi gong increases health and decreases the need for treatments such as acupuncture and herbal remedies.

Although qi gong fits within the philosophy of TCM, its practice has been adapted to be compatible with Western medicine, under the name *medical qi gong* (He, 2005; Twicken, 2011). Researchers have investigated the physical existence of qi, with claims that the practice of qi gong creates measurable changes in thermal and electrical energy (Shinnick, 2006). The practice of medical qi gong seeks to prevent disease, promote long life, and treat specific disease conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, and heart disease as well as stress and pain. Table 8.4 shows that the rate of qi gong practice is low in the United States.



Tai chi chuan is a movement-based technique that produces physical and psychological benefits.

Tai Chi. Tai chi (or *tai chi chuan*) is one category of qi gong, which has evolved from a martial art with a long but disputed history. Some advocates trace its history back thousands of years, whereas others point to a history of only several hundred years (Kurland, 2000). The key figures in its development are also the subject of debate, but a commonly cited story involves a Shaolin monk who noticed the struggle between a snake and a crane and adapted their movements to a form of defense. Over time, the practice of tai chi became increasingly popular to promote health, spreading throughout China and around the world. As one of the practices of TCM, tai chi cultivates balance between the yin and yang energies, thus promoting health.

Tai chi involves slow, gentle movements that shift the weight while the person maintains an upright yet relaxed posture and controlled breathing (NCCIH, 2006/2016). One movement flows into another, and those who practice tai chi strive to maintain a steady rate of movement while coordinating the breath with the movements, creating a “moving meditation.” The history of tai chi includes the development of many different styles, originally perpetuated within families. Currently, the Yang style is the most common in China and among those who practice tai chi as alternative

medicine. All the variations in styles include a set of movements connected together into a sequence, called a form. Tai chi provides moderate intensity aerobic exercise equivalent to brisk walking and a low-impact form of exercise that is appropriate for a wide variety of individuals (Taylor-Piliae et al., 2006). In addition, tai chi is useful in balance training and fall prevention as well as managing several chronic conditions such as pulmonary disease and cardiac conditions (Klein et al., 2019). As Table 8.4 shows, tai chi is more widely practiced in the United States than qi gong.

Biofeedback

Until the 1960s, most people in the Western world assumed that it was impossible to consciously control physiological processes such as heart rate, the secretion of digestive juices, and the constriction of blood vessels. These biological functions do not require conscious attention for their regulation, and conscious attempts at regulation seem to have little effect. Then, during the late 1960s, a number of researchers began to explore the possibility of controlling biological processes traditionally believed to be beyond conscious control. Their efforts culminated in the development of **biofeedback**,

the process of providing feedback information about the status of biological systems.

Early experiments indicated that biofeedback made possible the control of some otherwise automatic functions. In 1969, Neal E. Miller reported a series of experiments in which he and his colleagues altered the levels of animals' visceral response through reinforcement. Some subjects received rewards for raising their heart rate and others for lowering it. Within a few hours, significant differences in heart rate appeared. After other investigators demonstrated that biofeedback could be used with humans (Brown, 1970; Kamiya, 1969), interest in this procedure became widespread.

In biofeedback, electronic instruments measure biological responses, and the status of those responses becomes immediately available to the person using the machines. By using biofeedback, a person gains information about changes in biological responses as those responses are taking place. This immediate feedback allows the person to alter physiological responses that are otherwise almost impossible to control voluntarily.

Many types of biofeedback exist; few are common in clinical use, but electromyography and thermal biofeedback are more common than other types. **Electromyograph (EMG) biofeedback** reflects the activity of the skeletal muscles by measuring the electrical discharge in muscle fibers. The measurement is possible by attaching electrodes to the skin's surface over the muscles to be monitored. The level of electrical activity reflects the degree of tension or relaxation of the muscles. The machine responds with a signal that varies according to that muscle activity. Biofeedback allows individuals to increase muscle tension in rehabilitation or to decrease muscle tension in stress management. The most common use of EMG biofeedback among CAM users is in the control of low back pain and headaches; however, EMG biofeedback is becoming more widely recognized as being useful in rehabilitation (Giggins et al., 2013).

Thermal biofeedback, which may also help people cope with stress and pain, is based on the principle that skin temperature varies in relation to stress levels. Stress tends to constrict blood vessels, whereas relaxation opens them. Therefore, cool surface-skin temperature may indicate stress and tension; warm skin temperature suggests calm and relaxation. Thermal biofeedback involves placing a **thermistor**—a temperature-sensitive resistor—on the skin's surface. The thermistor signals changes in skin temperature, thereby furnishing the information that allows control. The feedback signal, as

with EMG biofeedback, may be auditory, visual, or both. As Table 8.4 shows, children rarely receive biofeedback, and the practice is not common among adults.

Hypnotic Treatment

Although trancelike conditions are probably older than human history, modern hypnosis is usually traced to the last part of the 18th century, when Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer conducted elaborate demonstrations in Paris. Although Mesmer's work was the target of attacks, modifications of his technique, known as *mesmerism*, soon spread to other parts of the world. By the 1830s, some surgeons used mesmerism as an anesthetic during major operations (Hilgard & Hilgard, 1994).

With the discovery of chemical anesthetics, the popularity of hypnosis waned, but during the late 19th century, many European physicians, including Sigmund Freud, employed hypnotic procedures in the treatment of mental illness. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the popularity of hypnosis as a medical and psychological tool has continued to wax and wane. Its present position is still somewhat controversial, but a significant number of practitioners within medicine and psychology use hypnotherapy to treat health-related problems, especially pain. As Table 8.4 shows, the technique remains in limited use.

Not only is the use of hypnotic processes still controversial but the precise nature of hypnosis is also a topic of debate. Some authorities, such as Joseph Barber (1996) and Ernest Hilgard (1978), regarded hypnosis as an altered *state* of consciousness in which a person's stream of consciousness is divided or dissociated. Barber argued that hypnotic analgesia works through a process of negative hallucination—not perceiving something that one would ordinarily perceive. To Hilgard, the process of **induction**—that is, being placed into a hypnotic state—is central to the hypnotic process. After induction, the responsive person enters a state of divided or dissociated consciousness that is essentially different from the normal state. This altered state of consciousness allows people to respond to suggestion and to control physiological processes that they cannot control in the normal state of consciousness.

The alternative view of hypnosis holds that it is a more generalized *trait*, or a relatively permanent characteristic of some people who respond well to suggestion (T. X. Barber, 1984, 2000). Those who hold this view reject the basic conception that hypnosis is altered

consciousness. Rather, they argue that hypnosis is nothing more than relaxation, induction is not necessary, and suggestive procedures can be just as effective without entering a trancelike state.

Research has not resolved this controversy. Brain imaging studies (De Benedittis, 2003; Rainville & Price, 2003) tend to support the view that hypnosis is an altered state of consciousness. However, in a study comparing hypnotic to nonhypnotic suggestion (Milling et al., 2005), both types were comparably effective. That is, expectancy and suggestion led to a reduction of pain whether participants were hypnotized or not.

Physiology and Mind–Body Medicine

A growing body of research validates the extent to which mind–body medicine lives up to its name; that is, these behavioral techniques affect a variety of biological processes. For example, brain-imaging studies have helped clarify what happens when a person relaxes and meditates. Attention and executive function monitoring are altered in meditation (Manna et al., 2010), and different meditation techniques prompt different patterns of brain activation. Other research has explored what brain changes accompany meditation, suggesting that practicing meditation may have the capability to delay or even reverse some of the brain changes that occur through aging (Luders, 2013).

Research into the nature of mindfulness training (Jha, Krompinger, et al., 2007; Jha, Dekova, et al., 2019) suggests that it improves attention processes by altering the subcomponents of attention such as orienting attention and alerting attention. In mindfulness meditation, the prefrontal cortex and anterior cingulate cortex show higher levels of activation, and long-term experience with meditation prompts changes in brain structures involved in attention (Chiesa & Serretti, 2010). Additional research (Hölzel et al., 2011) confirmed that mindfulness meditation works by altering brain function.

Another physiological effect of mindfulness-based stress reduction involves improved function in several immune system components (Rosenkranz et al., 2013). A meta-analysis (Morgan et al., 2014) confirmed the ability of mind–body techniques to modulate immune system function. Evidence also exists that qi gong training produces changes in the function of the immune system (Creswell, 2017; Lee et al., 2005). These physiological effects specify routes through which meditation and qi gong might improve health.

IN SUMMARY

Mind–body medicine is a term applied to a variety of techniques that people use to improve their health or treat health problems, including meditation, guided imagery, yoga, qi gong, tai chi, biofeedback, and hypnosis. Transcendental meditation directs people to focus on a single thought or sound to achieve relaxation, whereas mindfulness meditation encourages practitioners to focus on the moment, becoming mindful of the details of their current experience. Guided imagery encourages people to create a pleasant scene to achieve relaxation and anxiety relief. Yoga uses physical postures, breathing, and meditation, with the goal of balancing body, mind, and spirit. The movement-based practices of qi gong and tai chi originated in TCM. Qi gong and tai chi involve postures and movements intended to direct and balance the body's vital energy.

Biofeedback is the process of providing feedback information about the status of biological systems with the goal of controlling them. Many types of biofeedback exist; but learning to control muscle tension through electromyograph biofeedback and skin temperature through thermal biofeedback has the widest clinical applications. Hypnotic treatment is controversial, with some authorities arguing that it represents an altered state of consciousness that boosts relaxation and suggestibility, whereas others contend that it is a trait of some individuals. In either case, relaxation and suggestibility both have the potential to improve health.

Mind–body medicine also has the power to alter physiology. Meditation, mindfulness meditation, and qi gong have all shown the power to alter physiological processes. These beneficial changes include altering brain functions for more effective cognitive processing, slowing brain changes that accompany aging, and boosting some components of immune efficiency.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Find a video showing the practice of at least three of the following: meditation, guided imagery, yoga, qi gong or tai chi, biofeedback, and hypnosis. After viewing all videos, explain which one you find most appealing and why.

8-5 Who Uses Complementary and Alternative Medicine?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 8-13** Trace the increase of CAM usage in the United States over the past 20 years
- 8-14** Analyze the influence of culture and geography in the acceptance and use of CAM
- 8-15** Describe two personal factors that increase the likelihood of CAM use

People use techniques from CAM to enhance health, prevent disease, and manage health problems. Many of the techniques from CAM are applicable and widely used in managing anxiety, stress, and pain. Indeed, a great deal of the research funded by the U.S. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health is oriented toward assessing the effectiveness of these approaches for these conditions.

The number of people who find CAM techniques appealing has grown, and research has also tracked that growth. A comparison of CAM use in 2002, 2007, and 2012 in the United States (Black et al., 2015; Clarke et al., 2015) showed increases between 2002 and 2007 for many categories and continued increases in 2012 for a few. The number of people who use natural products such as omega-3 fatty acid supplements, glucosamine, and echinacea Across all three assessments, the most popular CAM techniques were the use of natural dietary supplements such as omega 3 fatty acid supplements, glucosamine, and echinacea. Increases also appeared between 2002 and 2007 for the use of deep-breathing exercises, meditation, yoga, massage, and chiropractic care. Few increases occurred between 2007 and 2012, but between 2012 and 2017, increases occurred in yoga (14.3%), meditation (14.2%), and chiropractic (10.3%; Clarke et al., 2018).

People not only use a variety of CAM techniques; they also use the techniques for a variety of reasons. However, pain is a prominent problem that brings adults (Zhang et al., 2015) and children (Black et al., 2015) to use CAM. The situation suggests that CAM users tend to have conditions that produce pain, a suggestion confirmed by other analyses (Ayers & Kronenfeld, 2011; Wells et al., 2010). In addition, pain may be

inadequately addressed through conventional medicine (Freedman, 2011), leading these patients to seek alternative care in addition to conventional treatment. Indeed, most people who use CAM combine the techniques with conventional treatments rather than abandoning conventional treatments. This pattern is similar to CAM use in Europe (Kemppainen et al., 2018), Canada (Foltz et al., 2005), and Israel (Shmueli et al., 2011).

Culture, Ethnicity, and Gender

CAM use varies among countries to some extent. In a population study in Australia, 68.9% of people (Xue et al., 2007) and over 70% of Australian women (Bowe et al., 2015) reported using some form of CAM, indicating a substantially higher level of use than in the United States. The Australian government has integrated CAM into health care delivery to a greater extent than in most other English-speaking countries (Baer, 2008); this level of accessibility explains the high prevalence.

In Europe, the percentage of users varies by country (Kemppainen et al., 2018). Some countries are similar to the United States with a low level of use whereas about 40% of people in Germany and Switzerland use some form of CAM. In Germany and Switzerland, the types of treatments and demographics of users were similar to that found in the United States. Pain was a common reason for seeking CAM. Women were more likely than men and people in higher socioeconomic and educational groups were more likely than others to seek some treatment outside conventional medicine. However, the types of treatments showed some differences; massage therapy, herbal remedies, homeopathy, and acupuncture were the most common types of CAM throughout Europe.

Within Europe, the regulation of CAM practitioners varies. Some countries put many restrictions on CAM practitioners, which limits the availability, whereas other countries have few restriction on CAM practice (Wiesener et al., 2018) In countries, such as Germany and the United Kingdom, CAM is integrated into medical practice; physicians receive training in CAM and refer patients to CAM practitioners. In countries in which CAM is integrated into the health services, users tend to come from a wider variety of socioeconomic backgrounds than in countries such as the United States, where most CAM users must pay out-of-pocket for such treatments (Romeyke & Stummer, 2015).

In the United States and Canada, CAM use varies with ethnicity in complex ways (Park, 2013). The variations do not correspond to stereotypes that link

CAM to ethnic minorities and immigrants (Keith et al., 2005; Roth & Kobayashi, 2008): Non-Hispanic European Americans are more likely than African Americans or Hispanic Americans to use CAM (Clarke et al., 2015). Indeed, recent immigrants are *less* likely to use CAM than immigrants who have been in the United States for years (Su et al., 2008). A similar finding emerged from a study of Asian Americans (Hsiao, Wong, et al., 2006) and Asians in Canada (Roth & Kobayashi, 2008). However, Asian Americans used CAM at higher rates than non-Hispanic European Americans, and Asians in Canada use CAM more frequently than the Canadian population in general. Chinese Americans' usage of CAM tended to correspond to their culture: Chinese Americans were more likely than other Asian Americans to use herbal products (Hsiao, Wong, et al., 2006) and to seek acupuncture treatment (Burke et al., 2006). Similar patterns apply to countries around the world: Acupuncture is more common in Japan, Singapore, Australia, and Canada than in Saudi Arabia, Israel, or Denmark (Cooper et al., 2013). In Canada, CAM use is related to how strongly users identified with Asian culture (Roth & Kobayashi, 2008).

In all ethnic groups and in various countries, individuals who seek CAM tend to be female, in the upper-income brackets, and well educated. In the United States, well-educated European American women are more likely than others to use CAM (Zhang et al., 2015). Even among children who use CAM, girls from upper-income families are more common than others (Groenewald et al., 2016). Education is also a factor, and one study (Burke et al., 2015) pointed to a lack of health knowledge as a factor that prevents people from using CAM. The willingness of women to use CAM may relate to health concerns but also to personal beliefs (Furnham, 2007). The importance of personal beliefs and the compatibility of CAM with one's beliefs may explain the motivation of some people to seek alternative treatments, whereas others do not.

Motivations for Seeking Alternative Treatment

Although culture, ethnicity, and gender each show a relationship to CAM use, other factors are probably more important. One of those important factors is acceptance of the underlying CAM values. Research findings suggest that people use CAM when the techniques are compatible with their personal worldviews and concerns about health (Astin, 1998). For example,

young men who expressed strong beliefs in science were less likely to use CAM than other people (Furnham, 2007). People who have less faith in conventional medicine and stronger beliefs in the role of attitude and emotion in health are more likely to try CAM. Thus, openness to different worldviews, acceptance of the value in holistic treatment, and belief in the contribution of biopsychosocial factors to health are more typical of CAM users than of those who stay with conventional treatments exclusively.

A person's current health status is also an important predictor of CAM usage. People tend to seek alternative treatments when conventional medicine has not offered relief for their conditions and they feel abandoned by that system (Armstrong, 2017). However, all CAM users are not dissatisfied with conventional medicine (Astin, 1998); people tend to add alternative treatments to the conventional ones they are using rather than replacing conventional treatments with alternative ones. Research on a representative sample of U.S. residents (Nerurkar et al., 2011) found that the combination of chronic health problems and a persistence of those problems related to physicians' willingness to refer these patients to CAM practitioners. The findings from this study and another study (Freedman, 2011) suggest that unresponsive chronic conditions make people more willing to seek alternative treatments. Reasonably enough, people who are unwell and continue to experience distressing symptoms are motivated to find some effective treatment, including alternative medicine. For example, people who received treatment for cancer were substantially more likely to use CAM than those who had not been treated for cancer (Mao et al., 2011). One analysis (Ayers & Kronenfeld, 2011) indicated that the experience of pain was the best predictor of CAM usage, a pattern also found among children (Groenewald et al., 2016). However, one survey of CAM users (Nguyen et al., 2011) indicated that they were more likely than nonusers to rate their health as excellent and to say that their health had improved over the previous year. This combination of findings suggests that CAM users may fall into one group who seek alternative treatments due to some health problems and another who strive to maintain or better their health through CAM.

Within both conventional and alternative medicine lie concerns about effectiveness and safety for the various CAM products and practices. What is the evidence of success for these alternative approaches?

IN SUMMARY

Most people who use CAM use it as a complementary rather than an alternative treatment. People in the United States and other countries use a great variety of CAM products and practices, including natural products, deep-breathing exercises, massage, meditation, chiropractic treatments, and yoga. People in Australia and some European countries use CAM more often than people in the United States, but the assortment of techniques is similar. Ethnicity is a factor in CAM use in the United States, but ethnic stereotypes of recent immigrants' using traditional remedies are incorrect. CAM usage is associated with being female, European American, well educated, and in a high-income bracket. This combination of demographic characteristics also applies to CAM use in Canada, Australia, and many European countries.

People are motivated to use CAM if their worldviews are compatible with the philosophies that underlie CAM—accepting a biopsychosocial view of health rather than a biomedical view. Health status is also a motivation for seeking CAM; people whose health problems have not responded to conventional treatments may be motivated to seek CAM.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Construct two demographic profiles: one of a person who is likely to adopt some form of CAM and another of a person who is unlikely to use CAM.

8-6 How Effective Are Alternative Treatments?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 8-16** Describe the challenges that CAM researchers face in establishing the effectiveness of alternative medicine treatments
- 8-17** Evaluate the evidence for the effectiveness of meditation, movement-based practices, and acupuncture as treatment for stress and anxiety

8-18 Evaluate the evidence for the effectiveness of meditation, acupuncture, massage, chiropractic treatments, biofeedback, and hypnosis as pain treatments

8-19 Describe three limitations to CAM use

8-20 Explain how integrative medicine attempts to create a system with “the best of both worlds”

Alternative treatments are classified as *alternative* because insufficient evidence exists for their effectiveness. However, a great deal of controversy exists concerning fair evaluation of alternative medicine. Advocates of conventional medicine contend that evidence is weak concerning the effectiveness of alternative treatments and that the dangers remain unevaluated (Berman & Straus, 2004; Wahlberg, 2007). According to this view, the only acceptable method of establishing effectiveness is the randomized controlled trial in which participants are assigned randomly to a treatment group or a placebo control group in a double-blind design; neither practitioner nor participants know to which treatment condition participants belong.

Using the randomized controlled method of conducting experiments allows researchers to minimize the influence of bias and expectation. Both factors are important in evaluating treatment studies (as discussed in Chapter 2). People who have expectations concerning CAM will bring this bias into treatment, which may affect the outcome. For example, a study on acupuncture (Linde et al., 2007) assessed participants' attitudes about the effectiveness of acupuncture at the beginning of the study. The results indicated that those who expressed belief that acupuncture was an effective treatment experienced greater pain relief from an eight-week course of treatment than did those who had lower expectations for success. Although expectations for success boost treatment effectiveness, these expectations are a placebo response rather than a response to the treatment. Thus, those who advocate for randomized placebo-controlled trials have a valid point: This design represents a stringent criterion for evidence of effectiveness.

Unfortunately, many alternative treatments do not lend themselves to placebo control and blinding as easily as drug treatments do. For example, most people who receive a massage, practice meditation, or learn biofeedback training cannot be blind to their treatment, nor can practitioners of massage, biofeedback, or yoga

be unaware of the treatment they deliver. Thus, fewer options exist for controlling for expectation in CAM than in research on conventional medicine. When studies lack random assignment, placebo control, and “blinding,” advocates of conventional medicine judge these studies to be of lesser quality and thus less convincing. By these standards, CAM is inadequate; the standards that advocates of conventional medicine believe to be essential are impossible to meet. Regardless of the number of studies with positive results, treatments that have few randomized controlled trials will always yield judgments of insufficient evidence to make conclusions of effectiveness in systematic reviews.

Disputing the standard of randomized controlled trials is one strategy that CAM advocates have used to argue that CAM is the target of inappropriate judgments (Clark-Grill, 2007; Schneider & Perle, 2012), and others (Wider & Boddy, 2009) have warned that conducting systematic reviews on CAM treatments requires extra care to achieve a fair evaluation.

Another type of objection has come from the argument that conventional medicine has not met the standards that its defenders have required of CAM. Kenneth Pelletier (2002) argued that many of the treatments used in conventional medicine have not presented this standard of evidence—that is, much of the practice of conventional medicine has not come through evidence from randomized controlled trials. Instead, many of the standard treatments in medicine and surgery have evolved through clinical practice and observation of what works rather than through experimental evidence of effectiveness. Indeed, the concept of evidence-based medicine is relatively recent. This standard has been applied to CAM more stringently than to treatments within conventional medicine.

Despite these barriers, CAM researchers strive to conduct research that demonstrates effectiveness and safety; this route allows for greater acceptability of CAM treatments (Shannon et al., 2011). What does the evidence say about alternative treatments? Which approaches have demonstrated that they are effective, and for what conditions?

Alternative Treatments for Anxiety, Stress, and Depression

Many CAM modalities have targeted anxiety, stress, and depression; some have demonstrated their effectiveness. Meditation is an obvious choice for these conditions, and the research evidence confirms its effectiveness.

A systematic review of meditation for stress and stress-related health problems (Goyal et al., 2014) indicated benefits large enough to have clinical significance. In addition, similar evaluations of specific meditation techniques offer support for their effectiveness. For example, meta-analyses and systematic reviews of mindfulness-based stress reduction (Chiesa & Serretti, 2010; Grossman et al., 2004; Ivanovski & Malhi, 2007) and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (Fjorback et al., 2011) have found positive results. Mindfulness-based approaches seem to be effective for a wide variety of people for anxiety, stress-related problems, and prevention of relapse into depression. The analyses also indicated that mindfulness meditation can help not only people with stress-related and anxiety disorders but also people without clinical problems seeking better ways to manage the stresses in their lives. Those who practiced the technique more also received greater benefits, indicating a dose-response relationship (Carmody & Baer, 2008).

Studies on transcendental meditation have also been the focus of a systematic review (Krisanaprakornkit et al., 2006), which indicated that this type of meditation is similar to other relaxation modalities in helping people with anxiety disorders. A systematic review of yoga (Chong et al., 2011) showed that yoga also constitutes an effective approach to stress management; another study (Zoogman et al., 2019) found that yoga was effective in decreasing anxiety. Thus, the majority of evidence indicates that meditation and programs that include meditation are effective treatments for managing anxiety and depression.

The movement-based practices of qi gong and tai chi also show stress-reducing effects. A randomized, control study evaluated the effects of a 12-week tai chi course compared to an exercise intervention and a wait-list control (Zheng et al., 2017). The participants were healthy but stressed; results indicated a significant benefit for both tai chi and exercise in diminishing stress and anxiety. A number of physiological measurements indicate that the practice of qi gong reduces stress (Sancier & Holman, 2004) and affects the nervous system in ways that reduce the stress response and improve several chronic illnesses (Ng & Tsang, 2009). A study of older Chinese immigrants at risk for cardiovascular disease showed improvements in mood and stress after practicing tai chi for 12 weeks (Taylor-Piliae et al., 2006). A systematic review of tai chi practice (Wang, Bannuru, et al., 2010) indicated a wide range of benefits including relief from anxiety, stress, and depression.



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Meditation can help people cope with depression and a variety of stress-related problems.

A systematic review of qi gong practice (Wang et al., 2014) revealed benefits in reducing anxiety and stress.

Acupuncture also holds some promise in treating depression. In systematic reviews (Leo & Ligot, 2007; Smith et al., 2010), evaluating the effectiveness of acupuncture for depression was difficult, but results indicated that responses to acupuncture treatment were comparable to the use of antidepressant drugs in relieving symptoms of depression. The possibility also exists that combining acupuncture treatment with medication will lead to a boost in effectiveness (Smith et al., 2010). Yoga has also been a successful complementary treatment for depressed people who did not experience a complete response to antidepressant drugs (Shapiro, Cook, et al., 2007). Another effective alternative treatment for depression is the herbal remedy Saint-John's wort. A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials indicated that an extract of this herb alleviates mild to moderate clinical depression, with effectiveness similar to that of antidepressant drugs, but with fewer side effects (Linde et al., 2008).

Therefore, a variety of alternative medicine approaches have demonstrated effectiveness in treating anxiety, stress, and depression. **Table 8.5** summarizes the evidence for alternative treatments for anxiety, stress, and depression.

Alternative Treatments for Pain

As Chapter 7 presents, chronic pain presents problems for those who experience it and for those who attempt to treat it. Conventional medicine often fails to control pain adequately, which motivates many people to seek alternative treatments (Ayers & Kronenfeld, 2011; Wells et al., 2010). A variety of alternative treatments have undergone evaluation for pain relief, and the results indicate that the CAM techniques that are successful in managing pain vary somewhat from those that are effective in managing anxiety, stress, and depression.

Meditation and the related technique of guided imagery received a strong endorsement from a National Institutes of Health Technology panel review, which concluded that these interventions were effective in managing chronic pain (Lebovits, 2007). Additional research (Grant et al., 2010) has determined that experienced meditators' pain sensitivity decreases, including detectable brain changes that underlie this benefit. A test of mindfulness-based stress reduction, which consists of mindfulness-based meditation and yoga, demonstrated effectiveness in managing low back pain, both after an eight-week training and at a one-year follow-up (Cherkin et al., 2016).

Guided imagery has also received a rating as a best practice for the pain associated with pregnancy and

childbirth (Naparstek, 2007). This technique is also effective in managing headaches (Tsao & Zeltzer, 2005) and for reducing postoperative pain in children (Huth et al., 2004) and in older people (Antall & Kresevic, 2004).

TCM-derived techniques can also be useful in pain control, including tai chi, qi gong, and acupuncture. Tai chi demonstrated its effectiveness in helping adults with tension headache manage their pain (Abbott et al., 2007). A systematic review of studies of qi gong (Lee et al., 2007a) found encouraging evidence regarding its effectiveness in treating chronic pain. Randomized controlled trials showed that qi gong (Haak & Scott, 2008) and tai chi (Wang, Schmid, et al., 2010) provided relief from pain and improvement in quality of life for people with fibromyalgia.

Acupuncture is better established as a pain treatment than either tai chi or qi gong. A study of the brain changes in connection with acupuncture (Napadow et al., 2007) revealed that participants who received acupuncture, compared with those who received sham acupuncture, showed changes in brain activity that were consistent with decreases in pain perception. Acupuncture also produces complex reactions in the somatosensory system and alters the central nervous system's neurochemistry, which is likely related to its analgesic effects (Manni et al., 2010).

Reviews of the effectiveness of acupuncture for a variety of pain conditions have indicated that acupuncture has demonstrated positive effects for some pain conditions but not for others. For example, the evidence regarding benefits of acupuncture is persuasive for success in treating neck pain (Trinh et al., 2016) and more successful for neck pain than for shoulder or elbow pain (Dhanani et al., 2011). Acupuncture is also more effective in treating tension-type headache pain than in treating migraine headache pain (Linde et al., 2016). The evidence for acupuncture as a treatment for decreasing arthritis knee pain has become more positive as more and better-quality studies reveal positive results. Acupuncture also exerts general analgesic effects at a speed comparable of injected analgesic drugs (Xiang et al., 2017).

Back pain is a common and challenging pain problem, and acupuncture has demonstrated some effectiveness in dealing with this pain syndrome. A meta-analysis of acupuncture for low back pain (Manheimer et al., 2005) indicated that this treatment is more effective for short-term relief of chronic back pain than sham acupuncture or no treatment. In a systematic review that considered all types of treatment for back

pain (Keller et al., 2007), acupuncture was among the most effective treatments, although none of the treatments revealed a high degree of effectiveness. This result may point to an answer to some of the confusion concerning the effectiveness of acupuncture (Johnson, 2006): When compared with other treatments, acupuncture may fail to show advantages. When compared to no treatment, the effects may be small. However, none of the available treatment for this condition, including all conventional medicine treatments, is very effective. Therefore, acupuncture may be at least as effective a treatment as any for low back pain. An updated meta-analysis (Vickers et al., 2018) indicated that acupuncture showed significant effects in controlling chronic pain and suggested that this treatment is a reasonable recommendation for chronic pain patients. A systematic review and meta-analysis (Furlan et al., 2012) confirmed the effectiveness of acupuncture for low back pain, but the review also showed that other CAM modalities were comparably effective, including massage and spinal manipulation.

A large-scale research project (Witt et al., 2006) examined the benefits of integrating acupuncture into standard medical care for chronic pain. Low back pain, hip and knee osteoarthritis, neck pain, and headaches were among the types of pain included in treatment. The study found that acupuncture was effective in addition to the benefit obtained from standard medical care. That is, in addition to providing benefits as an alternative treatment, acupuncture was an effective complementary therapy for a variety of pain syndromes. This benefit is not confined to human patients, as the Would You Believe . . . ? box describes.

Massage is another treatment for pain, and a review of massage for all types of chronic pain except cancer pain (Tsao, 2007) indicated varying degrees of effectiveness for different pain syndromes. The strongest evidence of effectiveness came from studies on low back pain (Furlan et al., 2008), whereas the evidence for shoulder and headache pain was more modest (Tsao, 2007). A later study (Cherkin et al., 2011) confirmed the benefits for low back pain, and another study (Sherman et al., 2009) showed benefits for massage in relieving neck pain. Because of a lack of high-quality studies, a review of massage for musculoskeletal pain (Lewis & Johnson, 2006) failed to reach conclusions concerning effectiveness.

Chiropractic manipulation has also been the subject of systematic review. This type of CAM is most often used for back and neck pain, but one review

TABLE 8.5 Effectiveness of Alternative Treatments for Anxiety, Stress, and Depression

Problems	Findings	Type of Assessment	Studies
1. Anxiety and stress	Mindfulness-based stress reduction is effective.	Systematic review	Chiesa & Serretti, 2010; Goyal et al., 2014; Grossman et al., 2004
2. Anxiety and stress	Qi gong decreases anxiety and stress.	Systematic review	Wang et al., 2014
3. Relapse into depression	Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy is effective.	Systematic review	Fjorback et al., 2011; Goyal et al., 2014
4. Anxiety disorders and depression	Mindfulness meditation is effective.	Systematic review	Goyal et al., 2014; Ivantovski & Malhi, 2007
5. Stress	Mindfulness-based stress reduction is more effective if practiced more frequently.	Pretest–posttest design	Carmody & Baer, 2008
6. Anxiety disorders	Transcendental meditation is comparable to relaxation training.	Systematic review	Krisanaprakornkit et al., 2006
7. Anxiety and stress management	Yoga is effective.	Systematic review	Chong et al., 2011; Zoogman et al., 2019
8. Stress	Qi gong reduces physiological indicators of stress.	Case study	Sancier & Holman, 2004
9. Altering the stress response	Qi gong alters the stress response in ways that are beneficial to several chronic health conditions in older people.	Systematic review	Ng & Tsang, 2009
10. Stress and negative mood	Tai chi practice improves stress and mood among older Chinese immigrants.	Quasi-experimental, longitudinal study	Taylor-Piliae et al., 2006
11. Anxiety, stress, and depression	Tai chi practice improves these conditions.	Systematic review	Wang, Bannuru, et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2014
12. Depression	Acupuncture showed effectiveness comparable to antidepressant drugs.	Systematic review	Leo & Ligot, 2007; Smith et al., 2010
13. Depression	Yoga is a successful complementary treatment for people taking antidepressants.	Systematic review	Shapiro, Berkman, et al., 2007
14. Depression	Saint-John's wort is as effective as antidepressant drugs and produces fewer side effects.	Systematic review	Linde et al., 2008

found only small benefits (Rubenstein et al, 2011). However, a review of studies on spinal manipulation for musculoskeletal pain (Perram, 2006) indicated that chiropractic treatment was superior to conventional medical treatment for this type of pain.

However, chiropractic manipulation did not appear to be effective in treating tension headaches (Lenssinck et al., 2004), but another review (Haas et al., 2010) indicated benefits of spinal manipulation for neck-related headaches.

Would You BELIEVE...?

Humans Are Not the Only Ones Who Benefit from Acupuncture

Nonhuman animals are common in medical research, and the growing research base to establish the effectiveness of acupuncture uses animals as substitutes for humans. However, acupuncture also occurs in veterinary care. Indeed, about 75% of veterinary colleges offer training in alternative veterinary medicine (Memon et al., 2020).

Whereas rats are the most common species in creating animal models in research, horses, dogs, cats, and other animals receive acupuncture for the same pain problems that prompt humans to seek it. Another similarity in veterinary acupuncture is the combination of this alternative treatment with conventional veterinary care; that is, nonhuman animals receive acupuncture along with and

not a substitute for conventional veterinary care (Boldt, 2016).

However, some differences exist that pose challenges for the veterinary use of acupuncture. One challenge is determining when a horse or dog might need treatment; they can't tell anyone when their back hurts. However, sensitivity to touch and differences in behavior provide cues (Boldt, 2016). An additional challenge is mapping animals' bodies to locate equivalent sites to human acupuncture points (Alfaro, 2014). TCM has mapped these points for horses, but other species receive veterinary acupuncture.

For example, people seek acupuncture for their companion animals, and the reasons are similar to humans' reasons for seeking

CAM for themselves: back, neck, and arthritis pain (Woods et al., 2011). People who sought acupuncture for their dogs or cats also tended to fit the same demographics as people who seek such care for themselves: well-educated, upper-income range, and more women than men. The pet owners were more likely than the average person to have experience with acupuncture (over 50%) and to believe in its effectiveness. Much like the results from studies on humans, acupuncture is also effective for non-human animals in producing relief of back and neck pain, arthritis pain, surgical and postsurgical pain, and postsurgical nausea and vomiting (Boldt, 2016).

Early research on the effectiveness of biofeedback (Blanchard et al., 1990) looked promising. Thermal biofeedback with relaxation showed positive results as a treatment for migraine and tension headaches. Later research has painted a less optimistic picture; biofeedback demonstrated no greater effects than relaxation training in preventing migraine headaches (Stewart, 2004). A meta-analysis of biofeedback studies in the treatment of migraine (Nestoriuc & Martin, 2007) indicated a medium-sized effect, but no such benefit appeared in an assessment of treatment effectiveness for tension-type headache (Verhagen et al., 2009) or for low back pain (Roelofs et al., 2002). The added expense associated with providing biofeedback is a drawback for this CAM. On balance, then, biofeedback shows more limited benefits than do some other CAM treatments for pain management.

Hypnotic treatment also has some applications in controlling pain, and the list of pains that are responsive to hypnotic procedures is extensive. A meta-analysis

(Montgomery et al., 2000) showed that hypnotic suggestion is equally effective in reducing both experimental pains induced in the laboratory and clinical pain that people experience in the world for about 75% of participants. Research exploring brain activity during hypnosis showed that hypnosis altered the brain response to painful stimulation in areas that underlie both the sensory and emotional responses to pain (Röder et al., 2007). Indeed, the effectiveness of hypnosis in managing pain may be its power to change the fear that often accompanies pain (De Benedittis, 2003).

Hypnosis is not equally effective with all types of clinical pain; it is more effective in controlling acute pain than in managing chronic pain (Patterson & Jensen, 2003). Hypnosis is most effective in helping people manage pain associated with invasive medical procedures, postoperative recovery, and burns. For example, research shows that hypnosis was effective in reducing the need for preoperative medication in children (Calipel et al., 2005), in stabilizing the

pain of invasive surgical procedures, and in reducing surgery patients' need for analgesic drugs (Lang et al., 2000). Hypnosis is especially effective in relieving gastrointestinal pain in children (Kröner-Herwig, 2009) and appears very effective in managing childbirth-related pain (Landolt & Milling, 2011). Burns are notoriously difficult to treat because they involve severe pain and suffering. An early review of the effectiveness of hypnosis in treating the pain associated with burns (Van der Does & Van Dyck, 1989) examined 28 studies that used hypnosis with burn patients and found consistent evidence of its benefits. Evidence of those benefits continues to accrue, and David Patterson (2010) has argued that hypnosis has shown such convincing results that it should no longer be considered alternative medicine.

Although hypnotic treatment is effective with many types of acute pain, chronic pain is a more difficult management issue, and hypnosis is not as successful with chronic pain such as headache and low back pain as it is with acute pain (Patterson & Jensen, 2003). Hypnosis is also more effective with some people than with others. Individual differences in susceptibility to hypnosis are a factor in the analgesic effects of hypnosis—highly suggestible people may receive substantial analgesic benefits from this technique, whereas others receive limited benefits (Thompson, et al., 2019). However, for those who are high or moderate in susceptibility, hypnotic suggestions of analgesia are quite effective in producing pain relief, especially if the imagery accompanying the suggestion includes analgesic medication imagery. Thus, hypnosis can be very effective with some people for some pain problems.

Table 8.6 summarizes the effectiveness of CAM treatments for pain. Although the studies on pain management using CAM could benefit from better design, evaluations of the results indicate that several of these techniques work for a variety of pain problems. Conventional medicine has not been very successful for many patients in managing chronic pain, and the conventional treatments tend to have many side effects, a criticism that is uncommon for CAM and thus an additional benefit.

Fewer side effects are not the only additional benefit to CAM use; a study of participants in several CAM clinical trials for pain (Hsu et al., 2010) identified a range of benefits in addition to the goals of the trial, including positive changes in emotion, coping ability, health, and well-being. Thus, CAM treatments have few of the risks of conventional medicine and may have some benefits not assessed in most studies of effectiveness.

Alternative Treatments for Other Conditions

Although anxiety, stress, depression, and pain are the most common problems for which people use CAM, some products and procedures are effective for other conditions. Both the products and procedures and the conditions for which they are effective vary widely; CAM has been used to achieve more rapid healing, to lower blood pressure, and to improve balance. For example, use of aloe vera speeds burn wound healing and lowers burn pain significantly (Walash et al., 2019). Although biofeedback is not as effective as other CAM for stress and pain, thermal biofeedback is effective in the management of **Raynaud's disease**, a disorder that involves painful constriction of peripheral blood vessels in the hands and feet (Karavidas et al., 2006). In addition, biofeedback has demonstrated its usefulness in the rehabilitation of motor abilities (Giggins et al., 2013), including after stroke (Langhorne et al., 2009). Hypnosis also showed its effectiveness in controlling nausea and vomiting associated with chemotherapy in children and adults, as well as pain relief due to treatments for cancer (Carlson et al., 2018). The practice of transcendental meditation received a positive evaluation in controlling risk factors such as high blood pressure and some of the physiological changes that underlie cardiovascular disease and thus may offer protection (Horowitz, 2010). Yoga may help not only to control some of the risks for type 2 diabetes (Innes & Vincent, 2007) but also to prevent cardiovascular complications in diabetics. A mindfulness-based meditation program was successful with male and female prisoners in improving mood and decreasing hostility (Samuelson et al., 2007). This assortment of effective treatments represents many different complementary and alternative interventions, but some systems of alternative medicine have yielded successful treatments for a number of problems.

TCM includes acupuncture, qi gong, and tai chi, all of which produce a wide range of effective treatments and other health benefits. For example, acupuncture (Ezzo et al., 2006) has demonstrated benefits in controlling nausea and vomiting associated with postoperative symptoms. Also, a systematic review showed that acupuncture was effective in treating insomnia (H. Y. Chen et al., 2007). Tai chi and qi gong produce improvements in blood pressure and other cardiovascular measures compared to a nonexercise intervention and benefits comparable to other exercise interventions

TABLE 8.6 Effectiveness of Alternative Therapies for Pain

Problems	Findings	Type of Assessment	Studies
1. Chronic pain	Meditation and guided imagery are effective.	Panel review, NIH Technology	Lebovits, 2007
2. Pain associated with pregnancy and childbirth	Guided imagery is the best practice for this type of pain.	Narrative review	Naparstek, 2007
	Hypnosis is effective for managing labor and delivery pain.	Methodological review	Landolt & Milling, 2011
3. Headache pain	Guided imagery is effective in managing headache pain.	Narrative review	Tsao & Zeltzer, 2005
	Acupuncture is effective for tension headache.	Systematic review	Linde et al., 2016
4. Postoperative pain in children	Guided imagery reduces postoperative pain.	Experimental study	Huth et al., 2004
5. Postoperative pain in older people	Guided imagery reduces postoperative pain.	Experimental study	Antall & Kresevic, 2004
6. Tension headache pain in adults	Tai chi was effective in a randomized controlled trial.	Randomized controlled trial	Abbott et al., 2007
7. Chronic pain	Qi gong was evaluated as promising in a systematic review.	Systematic review	Lee et al., 2007a
8. Fibromyalgia	Qi gong provided pain relief and lowered distress in a randomized controlled trial.	Randomized controlled trial	Haak & Scott, 2008
	Tai chi provided pain relief and improved quality of life.	Randomized controlled trial	Wang, Schmid, et al., 2010
9. Low back pain	Mindfulness-based stress reduction is effective both after training and at one-year follow-up.	Randomized controlled trial	Cherkin et al., 2016
10. Low back pain	Acupuncture is as or more effective than other approaches.	Review of systematic reviews	Keller et al., 2007; Manheimer et al., 2005
11. Low back pain	Acupuncture, massage, and spinal manipulation were all more effective than placebo.	Systematic review	Furlan et al., 2012
12. Low back pain, osteoarthritis, neck pain, and headache	Acupuncture was effective as a complementary treatment.	Randomized controlled trial	Witt et al., 2006
13. Low back pain, shoulder pain, and headache pain	Massage was effective for low back pain and modestly effective for shoulder and headache pain.	Review of meta-analyses and other reviews	Tsao, 2007
14. Low back pain	Massage can be effective for pain relief.	Randomized controlled trial	Cherkin et al., 2011
15. Neck pain	Acupuncture is effective.	Systematic review	Trihn et al., 2016
	Massage can be effective.	Randomized trial	Sherman et al., 2009

TABLE 8.6 (Continued)

Problems	Findings	Type of Assessment	Studies
16. Musculoskeletal pain	Massage studies are too limited to allow conclusions of effectiveness.	Systematic review	Lewis & Johnson, 2006
17. Back and neck pain	Chiropractic manipulation has only small benefits.	Systematic review	Rubenstein et al., 2011
18. Musculoskeletal pain	Chiropractic manipulation was more effective than conventional medical treatment.	Systematic review	Perram, 2006
19. Tension headache	Chiropractic manipulation was not found effective.	Systematic review	Lenzsinck et al., 2004
20. Neck-related headaches	Spinal manipulation showed benefits.	Randomized controlled trial	Haas et al., 2010
21. Migraine and tension headache	Thermal biofeedback plus relaxation produced a significant reduction in headache activity.	Randomized controlled trial	Blanchard et al., 1990
22. Migraine headache prevention	Thermal biofeedback is comparable to other preventive treatments.	Meta-analysis	Stewart, 2004
23. Migraine headache treatment	Biofeedback produced a medium-sized effect.	Systematic review	Nestoriuc & Martin, 2007
24. Tension headache treatment	Biofeedback produced no benefit.	Qualitative review	Verhagen et al., 2009
25. Low back pain	EMG biofeedback was not effective.	Narrative review	Roelofs et al., 2002
26. Experimental and clinical pain	Hypnotic suggestion is effective for clinical and experimental pain.	Meta-analysis	Montgomery et al., 2000
27. Fear and anxiety associated with pain	Hypnosis is especially effective.	Narrative review	De Benedittis, 2003
28. Clinical pain	Hypnosis is more effective in controlling acute than in managing chronic pain.	Narrative review of randomized controlled trials	Patterson & Jensen, 2003
29. Preoperative distress	Hypnosis reduces preoperative distress better than medication.	Experimental design	Calipel et al., 2005
30. Surgery pain	Self-hypnosis decreases postoperative pain and reduces need for drugs.	Randomized trial	Lang et al., 2000
31. Gastrointestinal pain in children	Hypnosis is especially effective.	Review of systematic reviews	Kröner-Herwig, 2009
32. Burn pain	Hypnosis is a valuable component in treating severe burn pain.	Narrative review	Patterson, 2010; Van der Does & Van Dyck, 1989
33. Factors affecting efficacy of hypnosis	Hypnotic susceptibility strongly affects effectiveness.	Systematic review	Thompson et al., 2019

(Jahnke et al., 2010). Qi gong practice, however, was not superior to drug treatment for blood pressure treatment (Guo et al., 2008) but appeared to be as effective as drug treatment in managing the risk factors for diabetes such as oral glucose tolerance and blood glucose (Xin et al., 2007).

Qi gong and the related practice of tai chi seem to have the ability to improve immune system function, which give these practices the potential for many health benefits. Compared with healthy control participants who did not practice qi gong or tai chi, the immune system response of those who practiced qi gong was enhanced in ways that would resolve inflammation more rapidly (Li et al., 2005). Older adults who practiced qi gong or tai chi showed an enhanced immune system response to influenza immunization (Yang et al., 2007). In a randomized controlled trial (Irwin et al., 2003), older adults who practiced tai chi exhibited an enhanced immune response to the herpes zoster (shingles) virus, even before they received the immunization for this virus. These benefits may be applicable to prevention and recovery from COVID-19 infection in older adults, who are especially vulnerable (Feng et al., 2020). These benefits may occur through not only the immune system boost but also a decrease in inflammation and strengthening of respiratory muscles. Thus, the practice of qi gong and tai chi seems to confer some immune system benefits that have been researched most extensively with older people but may apply to all.

The most common applications of tai chi have been among older people to improve balance and flexibility

and to decrease falls. A large body of evidence, including systematic reviews, leads to the conclusion that these practices are successful in reducing fear of falling (Jahnke et al., 2010) as well as improving balance and reducing fall rates (Huang et al., 2017). Qi gong and tai chi are also beneficial to bone density, which is an important underlying factor in falls among older people (Jahnke et al., 2010). Calcium and vitamin D supplements, another CAM treatment, are also effective in helping people over age 50 retain bone minerals (Tang et al., 2007).

Reasoning that the benefits of tai chi for balance and flexibility might apply to individuals with multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis, researchers have tested those benefits. A systematic review of the research on rheumatoid arthritis (Lee et al., 2007b) found some positive effects for disability, quality of life, and mood but not enough clear evidence to recommend this practice. Studies have assessed the benefits of tai chi for people with multiple sclerosis (Burschka et al., 2014; Taylor & Taylor-Piliae, 2017), both indicating substantial benefits for balance and mobility.

Thus, CAM interventions are effective for a variety of problems. The most persuasive evidence comes from mind–body medicine and TCM, but an assortment of products and procedures has demonstrated their effectiveness in randomized controlled trials, in meta-analyses, and in systematic reviews. **Table 8.7** summarizes these treatments. Despite some impressive evidence for effectiveness, treatments within CAM also have limitations.

TABLE 8.7 Effectiveness of Alternative Treatments for Other Conditions

Problems	Findings	Method of Assessment	Studies
1. Burn healing	Aloe vera speeds healing.	Systematic review	Walash et al., 2019
2. Raynaud's disease	Thermal biofeedback is an effective treatment.	Narrative review	Karavidas et al., 2006
3. Rehabilitation of motor abilities after injury or stroke	EMG biofeedback is effective.	Systematic review	Langhorne et al., 2009
4. Symptoms associated with cancer treatment	Hypnosis is effective in controlling anxiety and distress, nausea and vomiting, and pain.	Narrative review	Carlson et al., 2018
5. Physical reactions related to cardiovascular disease	Transcendental meditation shows beneficial effects.	Narrative review	Horowitz, 2010

TABLE 8.7 (Continued)

Problems	Findings	Method of Assessment	Studies
6. Risks for Type 2 diabetes	Yoga is effective in controlling risks and in decreasing CVD complications.	Systematic review	Innes & Vincent, 2007
7. Hostility	Mindfulness meditation is effective in moderating hostility among prisoners.	Pretest–posttest design	Samuelson et al., 2007
8. Postoperative nausea and vomiting	Acupuncture is effective.	Systematic review	Ezzo et al., 2006
9. Insomnia	Acupuncture is effective.	Systematic review	H. Y. Chen et al., 2007
10. High blood pressure and other responses related to cardiovascular disease	Tai chi and qi gong produce improvements.	Review of randomized controlled trials	Jahnke et al., 2010
	Qi gong practice lowered blood pressure, but not as much as drugs.	Meta-analysis	Guo et al., 2008
11. Risk factors for diabetes	Qi gong was effective in lowering risk.	Qualitative review	Xin et al., 2007
12. Immune system function	Qi gong and tai chi enhanced immune system response to influenza vaccination in older adults.	Controlled experiment	Yang et al., 2007
13. Immune system function	Tai chi practice enhanced older adults' immune system response to herpes zoster before and after immunization; increased immune function may protect against COVID-19	Randomized controlled experiment	Irwin et al., 2003; Feng et al., 2020
14. Fear of falling, balance, and falls	Tai chi and qi gong practice decreased fear of falling, increased balance, and decreased falls among older adults.	Review of randomized controlled trials	Jahnke et al., 2010
15. Osteoporosis	Calcium and vitamin D supplements slowed bone mineral loss in people over age 50.	Meta-analysis	Tang et al., 2007
16. Rheumatoid arthritis	Tai chi showed some positive effects but not clear enough evidence for a recommendation.	Systematic review	Lee et al., 2007b
17. Multiple sclerosis	Tai chi practice improved balance.	Controlled experiments Systematic review	Burschka et al., 2014; Taylor-Piliae, 2017

Limitations of Alternative Therapies

All forms of therapy have limitations, including CAM. One of the primary limitations is the reason any technique is considered *alternative*: the lack of information on its effectiveness. As we have seen, this deficit may be due to the sparseness of research rather than a lack of effectiveness. The growing interest in CAM and the funding for research through the U.S. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health have worked toward solving this problem, revealing that some products and procedures are effective, whereas others are not. Both conventional and alternative treatments are limited by their success for some conditions and not others. However, specific CAM techniques have limitations and even dangers.

Herbal remedies and botanicals are part of many CAM systems, including Ayurvedic medicine, TCM, naturopathy, and homeopathy. These types of natural products are the most commonly used CAM approaches in the United States (Black et al., 2015; Clarke et al., 2015). Like drug treatments, natural products such as herbal and botanical products carry risks of adverse reactions and interactions with over-the-counter and prescription drugs (Bellanger et al., 2017; Firenzuoli & Gori, 2007). Unlike drugs, the U. S. government classifies herbal remedies, dietary supplements, and other natural products as food, so these products receive evaluations only for safety and not for effectiveness (Bellanger et al., 2017). People often consider natural herbs and botanicals to be safe and even if not effective, then at least harmless. Such is not always the case. Sometimes, evidence of dangers accumulates only after a period of availability. Natural products may interact with each other or with prescription or over-the-counter medications, and many people who use natural products fail to inform their physicians of their CAM usage (Jou & Johnson, 2016).

Massage has many benefits but is not suitable for people with problems related to joints, weakened bones, damaged nerves, a tumor, an open wound, or infection, or for people with bleeding disorders or those who are taking blood-thinning agents (NCCIH, 2006/2019). Serious complications such as spinal disc herniation, tissue damage, and neurological damage are possible, but serious injury is very rare (Yin et al., 2014). Chiropractic treatment may do harm when applied to individuals with broken bones or infection, and treatment may produce headache or other discomfort (NCCIH, 2007/2012).

Acupuncture and acupressure do not work for everyone. Some people do not respond; T. R. Read was one who did not (National Public Radio, 2009). Some types of manipulation of the needles are more effective than others, and some needle placements work better than others (Martindale, 2001). Needles should be sterile and inserted properly; improper insertion and needles that are not sterile can cause damage and infection (Yamashita & Tsukayama, 2008). However, incidents involving these dangers occur rarely (Xu et al., 2013). Tai chi and qi gong are generally safe, but people with severe osteoporosis, sprains, fractures, or joint problems should exercise caution or modify the positions (NCCIH, 2006/2016). Meditation carries few health risks (NCCIH, 2007/2016b). Indeed, compared with the prevalence of medical errors made by conventional practitioners (Makary & Daniel, 2016), the risks from these alternative practices are small.

However, people should exercise caution in using any CAM treatment as an alternative to conventional medical care. People who trust alternative approaches and mistrust conventional medicine may fail to seek treatment that could be more effective. For example, yoga may help to control some of the risks for type 2 diabetes (Innes & Vincent, 2007), but for most people, yoga will not be sufficient to control diabetes. The majority of people who use CAM recognize the limitations of these therapies and use them as additions to conventional medical care. However, many people who use some CAM modality fail to tell their conventional medical practitioner that they are using an alternative as well as conventional treatment (Jou & Johnson, 2016). This failure may present risks due to interactions between the two treatments.

Another limitation for CAM is its accessibility. Not everyone who is interested in CAM may be able to find or to afford CAM treatment. Many CAM treatments are limited by the number of qualified practitioners and by their geographic location. For example, acupuncture use increased dramatically between 1997 and 2007 (Nahin et al., 2009) and continued to increase between 2007 and 2012 (Clarke et al., 2015). However, accessibility may remain a problem limiting its use. People who used alternative medicine products or procedures rarely receive reimbursement for the products they purchase or the services they receive (Burke & Upchurch, 2006). The failure to include CAM services in insurance reimbursement is typical in the United States and represents huge out-of-pocket expenditures to CAM users—an estimate of over \$30 billion (Lewing & Sansgiry, 2018).

One way to remove this barrier is to increase the presence of alternative treatments in conventional medical settings. This is the focus of integrative medicine.

Integrative Medicine

Integrating conventional and alternative medicine is what an increasing number of practitioners of alternative and conventional practitioners envision for optimal health care and treatment. T. R. Reid's experience with the Ayurvedic massage treatments that improved his shoulder pain provides an example of the wide range of possibilities for effective treatments outside of conventional medicine. However, the best practice would be combining the effective treatments from alternative medicine and create a system that included both approaches. The following quote sums up the need for a system that allows the integration of alternative and conventional treatment:

It becomes necessary therefore to create a balanced perspective, one that recognizes that attitudes such as a strong will to live, high purpose, a capacity for festivity, and a reasonable degree of confidence are not an alternative to competent medical attention, but a way of enhancing the environment of treatment. The wise physician favors a spirit of responsible participation by the patients in a total strategy of medical care. (UCLA Cousins Center for Psychoneuroimmunology, 2011, paragraph 1)

This approach is what most people attempt when they choose techniques and products from conventional and alternative medicine, but most people work toward this combination on their own rather than within the medical care system. However, integration would offer benefits but also faces barriers.

Currently, many people who use CAM do so without the guidance of their physician (Nerurkar et al., 2011) and often without informing their physician (Jou & Johnson, 2016). These people may feel reluctant to discuss their use of alternative treatment with a conventional practitioner because of the skepticism within conventional medicine about CAM (Frank et al., 2010). This skepticism makes physicians reluctant to refer patients to practitioners of alternative treatments and even hesitant to enter into collaborative relationships. Integrative medicine requires conventional and alternative medicine practitioners to accept the effectiveness of both approaches and to form a working relationship focused on the patient's health. Both the acceptance and the cooperation present challenges.

Practitioners who follow the biomedical model have basic differences from those who hold a biopsychosocial model, which affects the way that each views health and treatment (Lake, 2007). For example, the assumptions of TCM, chiropractic, and homeopathy have been difficult for many physicians trained in Western medicine to accept (Shere-Wolfe et al., 2013). Some conventional practitioners are vehemently opposed (Freedman, 2011), but others are more receptive, especially to techniques that are beginning to accumulate research support for effectiveness. Practitioners whose training has not included alternative treatments are more resistant than those who have training in CAM (Hsiao, Ryan, et al., 2006). Students in a variety of professional schools of health care have a great interest in CAM (Chow et al., 2016; Song et al., 2007). An increasing number of medical schools include CAM departments and curricula (Frank et al., 2010), but the philosophy of practice and treatment methods and strategies differ (Shannon et al., 2011). In 2009, the U.S. Institute of Medicine sponsored a conference titled "Summit on Integrative Medicine and the Health of the Public" (Ullman, 2010). Those who attended expressed hopes for an integration of conventional and alternative approaches to health and treatment, but they also acknowledged that this integration would require large changes in the medical delivery system.

Care integration is more common in some areas of practice than others, such as pain treatment, cancer care, and mental health problems. In pain clinics, pain is the problem, and treatment is oriented toward managing it and not the condition that originally caused it. Such a clinic often includes health care professionals from several specialties (Dillard, 2002), including (1) a physician trained in neurology, anesthesia, rehabilitation, or psychiatry; (2) a physical rehabilitation expert; (3) a psychiatrist or psychologist; and (4) a chiropractor, massage therapist, or acupuncturist (or all three). Integrative oncology also involves treatment by a team of providers. In addition to conventional treatments for cancer such as chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery, patients may participate in interventions aimed at pain control, stress management, nutrition, and physical activity. Stress management, healthy diet, and exercise represent changes that improve the quality of life for most people, but these lifestyle changes may also affect the progression of cancer (Boyd, 2007).

Several studies have researched integrated medicine programs to explore how the integration worked as well as the benefits and barriers for staff. One study evaluated

the Integrative Medicine Primary Care Trial (IMPACT), a 12-month evaluation of a clinic offering a range of care services (Crocker et al., 2019). The services included not only conventional medicine but also alternative treatments such as mind–body medicine, nutrition, acupuncture, and health education classes. Researchers evaluated a variety of assessments of mental and physical health, and results indicated improvements in mental, physical, and overall health.

Another integrative medicine program is available at the famous Mayo Clinic in Minnesota (Pang et al., 2015), where referrals to CAM increased between 2007 and 2010. The most common referrals to CAM practitioners were consistent with the practice of integrative medicine—pain management and stress management. Yet another study focused on a common setting for integrative medicine—cancer treatment centers. The practitioners in these centers in Germany and the United States (Mittring et al., 2013) had developed similar views, regardless of their background in conventional or alternative medicine, which included an emphasis on evidence-based treatment centered on a holistic approach to treating each patient. Conventional practitioners reported no difficulties in accepting alternative approaches but voiced problems with the additional time that the patient-centered, holistic approach created for scheduling and waiting times.

Such integrated approaches could apply to the treatment of many chronic diseases. The growing consumer interest in CAM has led an increasing number of patients to expect that their conventional medicine practitioners will be knowledgeable concerning CAM and willing to refer to them CAM practitioners (Ben-Arye et al., 2008). Despite a history of resistance, conventional medicine practitioners also have an increasing interest in CAM and a willingness to provide some alternative procedures or refer patients to CAM practitioners (Shere-Wolfe et al., 2013). Thus, the goal to attain the “best of both worlds” by combining conventional medicine with effective treatments from alternative medicine through a cooperation of the practitioners is progressing.

IN SUMMARY

For alternative treatments to be accepted by conventional medicine, research evidence must confirm their effectiveness. The standard for this evidence is controversial. Should CAM be held to the standard of effectiveness as demonstrated by randomized

controlled trials? Some in conventional medicine say so, but some in alternative medicine argue that most treatments in conventional medicine fail to meet this criterion. Nonetheless, evidence is accruing concerning effectiveness for CAM.

Both transcendental meditation and mindfulness meditation have demonstrated effectiveness for anxiety. Mindfulness-based stress reduction and the movement-based practices of qi gong and tai chi are effective in managing stress. Acupuncture and yoga show some promise of reducing depression, and the herbal remedy Saint-John’s wort reduces depression.

Guided imagery is an effective intervention in helping people manage several types of pain. Techniques from TCM have been successful in pain management, including qi gong, tai chi, and acupuncture. Qi gong and tai chi may be good choices for people with chronic pain problems, including headache and fibromyalgia. Acupuncture can be effective for easing low back and neck pain as well as pain from osteoarthritis. Research also indicates that massage is effective for low back pain, neck pain, musculoskeletal pain, and headache; chiropractic manipulation also helps the same set of pain syndromes. However, biofeedback is not as effective as other CAM treatments; biofeedback is like relaxation in managing migraine headaches but shows few benefits for treating other types of pain. Hypnosis is effective for a variety of types of pain but is more effective for acute pain such as postsurgical and burn pain than for chronic pain. For those who have a high degree of suggestibility, hypnosis can be an effective way to manage chronic pain.

Techniques from CAM are also effective for a variety of other conditions, including speeding burn healing (aloe vera), treating insomnia (acupuncture), controlling nausea and vomiting (hypnosis and acupuncture), managing Raynaud’s disease (thermal biofeedback), increasing motor movement after stroke (EMG biofeedback), and lowering risk for cardiovascular disease (meditation and qi gong) and diabetes (qi gong). Research has indicated that the practice of qi gong and tai chi can alter the immune system in beneficial ways, and tai chi improves balance and flexibility and decreases both the fear of falling and the number of falls in older adults.

Like all treatments, CAM has limitations and even dangers. Some herbal remedies and botanical products may be toxic or may interact with each

other or with over-the-counter/prescription drugs. Individuals with some conditions should avoid some treatments. For example, people with weakened bones should be cautious in seeking massage or chiropractic treatment. Another limitation for CAM is its accessibility, in terms of both availability and cost of treatments.

Integrative medicine is the integration of alternative and conventional medicine, which should provide the best of both approaches. The challenges for achieving such integration include melding the two discrepant traditions and training practitioners who will refer patients to each other when appropriate. The movement toward integrative medicine and integrative health is gaining popularity in many countries throughout the world. Two areas in which

integrative medicine is advancing most rapidly are pain management and cancer treatment.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Give advice about which varieties of CAM individuals with the following problems would find beneficial: stress or anxiety, chronic headache, childbirth-related pain, fibromyalgia, low back pain, neck pain, postoperative pain, and burn pain.
2. Design an integrative medicine facility, describing what types of disorders the facility would treat, what services the facility would offer, what professionals would be on the staff, and what specific types of services the facility would offer.

Questions

This chapter has addressed six basic questions:

1. What medical systems represent alternatives to conventional medicine?

The alternative medical systems include TCM, Ayurvedic medicine, naturopathy, and homeopathy. TCM and Ayurvedic medicine are ancient. Naturopathy and homeopathy arose in the 19th century and gained popularity in the early 20th century. Each of these systems presents a theory of health and disease as well as practices for diagnosis and treatment. All of the alternative systems share the concept of vital energy and the notion that bringing the mind and body together is important to health.

2. What products and diets count as alternative medicines?

Alternative products include dietary supplements, including nonvitamin products such as echinacea, glucosamine, omega-3 fatty acids, and a variety of herbs, extracts, and special foods that may be taken as curatives or preventatives. People use diets such as the Atkins diet, the Ornish diet, the Zone diet, DASH, and various vegetarian diets to maintain or enhance health or to control risk factors for disease.

3. What manipulative practices fall within alternative practices?

Manipulative techniques include chiropractic and massage; chiropractic manipulation focuses on adjusting the spine and joints, whereas massage manipulates soft tissue. Chiropractic treatment has grown in popularity; increasing research has demonstrated its effectiveness for dealing with several types of chronic pain. Massage has also increased in popularity as a therapeutic intervention to manage both pain and stress.

4. What is mind–body medicine?

Mind–body medicine is the term applied to a variety of techniques that are based on the notion that the brain, the mind, the body, and behavior interact in complex ways and that emotional, mental, social, and behavioral factors exert important effects on health. According to mind–body medicine, overlooking psychological factors will lead to an incomplete form of health treatment and lose the power that can come from enlisting mind and emotions in treatment. Included within mind–body medicine are meditation, guided imagery, yoga, qi gong, tai chi, biofeedback, and hypnosis.

5. Who uses complementary and alternative medicine?

Countries vary in CAM usage, and within countries, some demographic factors predict CAM use. Australia, Canada, and some European countries show higher percentages of the population seeking CAM treatments than the United States. Within the United States, ethnicity shows some relationship to CAM use, with European American, well-educated, and upper-income individuals using CAM more often than others. In all of these countries, women are more likely than men to use CAM. Personal attitudes of acceptance of CAM's underlying philosophy also predict use, as does health status—people who have a persistent health problem that conventional medicine has not helped are more likely to seek alternative treatment.

6. What are the effective uses and limitations of alternative treatments?

A variety of techniques are available to help people manage anxiety, stress, depression, pain, and other problems, and an increasing body of research indicates that some alternative treatments effectively manage these problems. Both transcendental and mindfulness meditation are effective in managing anxiety; mindfulness-based stress reduction helps in coping with stress. No one alternative technique is effective for all pain situations, but several are effective for some types of pain. Manipulation techniques such as massage and chiropractic treatment and mind-body techniques such as acupuncture seem to be as effective as any treatment for the difficult problem of chronic low back pain. The movement-based approaches of qi gong and tai chi show promise of helping to manage headaches and fibromyalgia and influence the immune system in beneficial ways. However, their primary therapeutic use is to help older people maintain balance and flexibility. Hypnosis also has benefits for pain control, but these benefits apply more to acute pain than to chronic pain.

Limitations to CAM come from limited research on its effectiveness, but that situation is

changing. Other limitations are similar to those of treatments in conventional medicine—hazards for some individuals using some treatments and drug interactions arising from the use of herbal treatments or dietary supplements. Treatment availability and cost are other limitations of CAM, but the growing interest in integrating CAM and conventional treatments holds the promise of greater access and more effective delivery of complementary treatments.

Suggested Readings

- Gannotta, R., Malik, S., Chan, A. Y., Urgun, K., Hsu, F., & Vadera, S. (2018). Integrative medicine as a vital component of patient care. *Cureus*, 10(8), e3098. doi: [10.7759/cureus.3098](https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.3098). This article presents a strong endorsement of integrative medicine's value but also speaks to the challenges and costs for implementing integrative medicine.
- Harrington, A. (2008). *The cure within: A history of mind-body medicine*. New York: Norton. Harrington's book takes a social and historical perspective on the status of alternative medicine, weaving together a wide collection of information concerning the interaction between mind and body.
- Lake, J. (2007). Philosophical problems in medicine and psychiatry, part II. *Integrative Medicine: A Clinician's Journal*, 6(3), 44–47. This brief article takes a historical and philosophical perspective in explaining the underlying differences in assumptions and worldviews between advocates of conventional and alternative medicine and how these differences present barriers to integrating the two types of medical care.
- Shannon, S., Weil, A., & Kaplan, B. J. (2011). Medical decision making in integrative medicine: Safety, efficacy, and patient preference. *Alternative & Complementary Therapies*, 17(2), 84–91. This thoughtful critique of both conventional and alternative medicine details safety and effectiveness concerns that should be used in all types of medicine.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- | | |
|--|---|
| 9-1 Contrast coronary artery disease and coronary heart disease | create a ranking of those behavioral risks from lowest to highest impact |
| 9-2 Explain how heart attack and stroke can arise from the same underlying disease processes | 9-8 Describe three ways that the psychosocial factors of educational level, income, and social support interact to create vulnerability to stress, anxiety, and depression |
| 9-3 Explain the difference between raised blood pressure due to stress or excitement and essential hypertension | 9-9 Trace the evolution of the Type A behavior pattern to the Type D personality |
| 9-4 Discuss the two factors that are the most important reasons for the dramatic decrease in cardiovascular disease over the past 75 years in the United States | 9-10 Explain how optimistic bias may prevent people from adhering to behaviors that decrease the risk for CVD |
| 9-5 Explain the difference between a risk factor and a cause for a disorder | 9-11 Discuss the factors that are necessary to manage to decrease the risk of CVD |
| 9-6 Describe the differences between the classification of risks as inherent and physiological conditions | 9-12 Evaluate the similarities and differences in decreasing CVD risks before and after an event such as stroke or heart attack |
| 9-7 After examining the impact of each of the categories of behavioral risks on the development of CVD, | |

CHAPTER 9

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Emilia Clarke The Cardiovascular System

- The Coronary Arteries
- Coronary Artery Disease
- Stroke
- Blood Pressure

The Changing Rates of Cardiovascular Disease

- Reasons for the Decline in Death Rates
- Heart Disease Throughout the World

Risk Factors in Cardiovascular Disease

- Inherent Risk Factors
- Physiological Conditions
- Behavioral Factors
- Psychosocial Factors

Reducing Cardiovascular Risks

- Before Diagnosis: Preventing First Heart Attacks
- After Diagnosis: Rehabilitating Cardiac Patients

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on four basic questions:

1. What are the structures, functions, and disorders of the cardiovascular system?
2. What are the risk factors for cardiovascular disease?
3. How does lifestyle relate to cardiovascular health?
4. What behaviors are effective in lowering cardiovascular risks?

Behavioral Factors in Cardiovascular Disease

In this chapter, we examine the behavioral risks for cardiovascular disease, the most frequent cause of death worldwide, especially in high-income countries such as the United States. But first, we describe the cardiovascular system. What is it, and what are methods of measuring how well it functions?

9-1 The Cardiovascular System

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 9-1 Contrast coronary artery disease and coronary heart disease
- 9-2 Explain how heart attack and stroke can arise from the same underlying disease processes
- 9-3 Explain the difference between raised blood pressure due to stress or excitement and essential hypertension

The **cardiovascular system** consists of the heart, arteries, and veins. The heart is a muscle that, by contracting and relaxing, pumps blood throughout the body. The heart is the center of a rapid-transit system that carries oxygen to body cells and removes carbon dioxide and other wastes from cells. Under healthy conditions, the cardiovascular, respiratory, and digestive systems are integrated; the digestive system produces nutrients while the respiratory system furnishes oxygen, both of which circulate through the blood to various parts of the body. In addition, the endocrine system affects the cardiovascular system by stimulating or depressing the rate of cardiovascular activity. Although we will view the cardiovascular system in isolation in this chapter, it does not function that way.



Check Your **HEALTH RISKS** Regarding Cardiovascular Disease

Question	Point
Age	
Are you a man 55 years or older OR woman 65 years or older?	2 if Yes
Smoking	
I never smoked	0
I am a former smoker (last smoked more than 12 months ago)	2
I smoke 1–5 cigarettes per day	2
I smoke 6–10 cigarettes per day	4
I smoke 11–15 cigarettes per day	6
I smoke 16–20 cigarettes per day	7
I smoke more than 20 cigarettes per day	11
Over the past 12 months, what has been your typical exposure to other people's tobacco smoke?	
Secondhand smoke	
Less than 1 hour of exposure per week	0
One or more hours of secondhand smoke exposure per week	2
Other health conditions	
Do you have diabetes mellitus?	6 if Yes
Do you have high blood pressure?	5 if Yes
Have either or both of your biological parents had a heart attack?	4 if Yes
Waist-to-hip ratio	
Less than 0.873	0
Between 0.873 and 0.963	2
Greater than 0.964	4
Psychosocial factors	
How often have you felt work or home life stress in the last year?	
Never or some periods	0
Several periods of stress or permanent stress	3
During the past 12 months, was there ever a time when you felt sad, blue, or depressed for weeks or more in a row?	3 if Yes
Dietary factors	
Do you eat salty food or snacks one or more times a day?	1 if Yes
Do you eat deep-fried foods or snacks or fast foods three or more times a week?	1 if Yes
Do you eat fruit one or more times daily?	1 if No
Do you eat vegetables one or more times daily?	1 if No
Do you eat meat and/or poultry two or more times daily?	2 if Yes
Physical activity	
I am mainly sedentary or perform mild exercise (requiring minimal effort)	2
I perform moderate or strenuous physical activity in my leisure time	0

Source: "Estimating modifiable coronary heart disease risk globally in multiple regions of the world: The INTERHEART modifiable risk score," by C. McGorrian et al. (2011), *European Heart Journal*, 32, Supplementary Table 2.

This checklist supplies you with your INTERHEART Modifiable Risk Score. The score derives from research on over 30,000 people from 52 different countries and represents the most recent method for calculating heart attack risk. If you score below 9, congratulations; you are at lowest risk for heart attack. If you score above 15, you are at highest risk for heart attack; however, most of these factors are under your control. In this chapter, you will learn why each of these factors increases risk for cardiovascular problems, and how you can decrease your risk.



Real-World Profile of **EMILIA CLARKE**



Emilia Clarke was a young actress just starting a career when she got the part of Daenerys Targaryen in *Game of Thrones* (Clarke, 2019). The first season was a huge success, and she became an instant celebrity. During the break between the first and second seasons, she was working out at a gym when she experienced an excruciating pain in her head. A few hours later, she was in a hospital having brain surgery to repair a burst aneurysm. At age 24, she had a stroke.

Clarke's survival was not certain, but she lived through a critical two-week period and stayed in the hospital for another two weeks. The extent of her brain damage became clear when she realized that she could not remember her name, and she could not speak coherently. However, these problems cleared up within a few weeks, and she was able to film the second season of *Game of Thrones*. But brain imaging done in the hospital revealed that she had another aneurysm in the other hemisphere of her brain that could also burst, causing another stroke.

Her condition required frequent brain scans to monitor the size of the aneurysm, and two years later, it had grown to a dangerous size. Clarke had another brain surgery; the recovery was even more difficult than the first. She doubted for her life and for her career, but over the next several years, she recovered fully.

Emilia Clarke's experience was not typical of cardiovascular disease in a number of ways. Most people who have strokes are older, but the type of stroke that she experienced can happen to a person of any age—even an infant. Her recovery was also more rapid than the typical stroke recovery. A more common outcome for the loss of cognitive and language abilities would involve a more prolonged recovery and possibly some lingering problems. Emilia's youth was probably a factor in her rapid recovery. Although almost 800,000 people in the United States have strokes every year, heart disease is an even more common occurrence.

The blood's route through the body appears in **Figure 9.1**. The entire circuit takes about 20 seconds when the body is at rest, but exertion speeds the process up. Blood travels from the right ventricle of the heart to the lungs, where hemoglobin (one of the components of blood) saturates it with oxygen. From the lungs, oxygenated blood travels back to the left atrium of the heart, then to the left ventricle, and finally out to the rest of the body. The **arteries** carry the oxygenated blood branch into vessels of smaller and smaller diameter, called **arterioles**, and finally terminate in tiny **capillaries**, which connect arteries and **veins**. Oxygen diffuses out to body cells, and carbon dioxide and other chemical wastes pass into the blood so they can be disposed of. Blood that has been stripped of its oxygen returns to the heart by way of the system of veins, beginning with the tiny **venules** and ending with the two

large veins that empty into the right atrium, the upper-right chamber of the heart.

This section briefly considers the functioning of the cardiovascular system, concentrating on the physiology underlying **cardiovascular disease (CVD)**, a general term that includes coronary artery disease, coronary heart disease, and stroke.

The Coronary Arteries

The coronary arteries supply blood to the heart muscle, the **myocardium**. The two principal coronary arteries branch off from the aorta (see **Figure 9.2**), the main artery that carries oxygenated blood from the heart. Left and right coronary arteries divide into smaller branches, providing the blood supply to the myocardium.

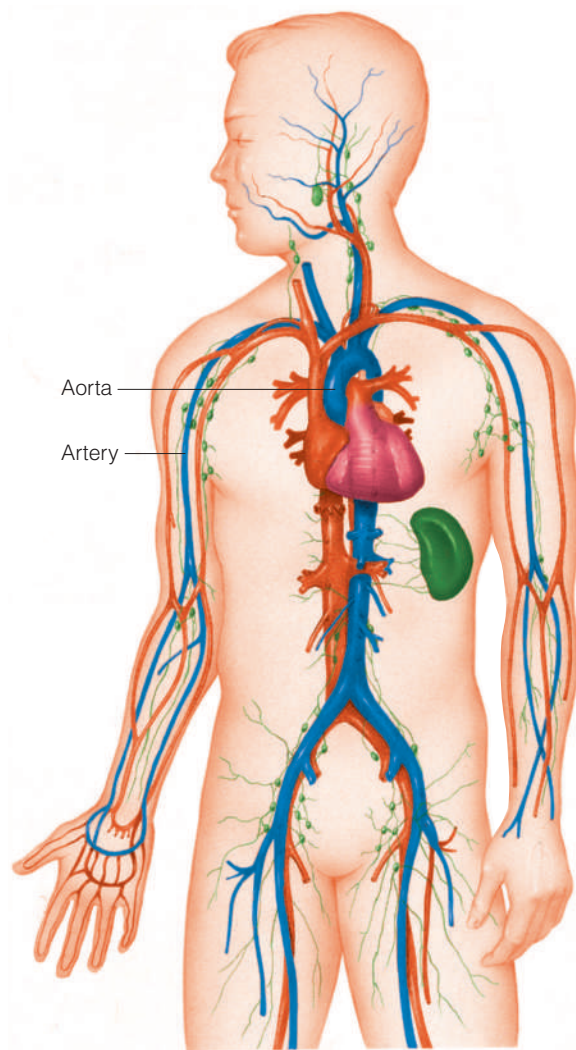


FIGURE 9.1 Cardiovascular circulation.

Source: *Introduction to microbiology* 1994 (p. 671), by J. L. Ingraham & C. A. Ingraham. From INGRAHAM/ INGRAHAM, *Introduction to Microbiology*, 1E.

With each beat, the heart makes a slight twisting motion, which moves the coronary arteries. The coronary arteries, therefore, receive a great deal of strain as part of their normal function. This movement of the heart has been hypothesized to almost inevitably cause injury to the coronary arteries (Friedman & Rosenman, 1974). The damage can heal in two different ways. The preferable route involves the formation of small amounts of scar tissue and results in no serious problem. The second route involves the formation of **atheromatous plaques**, which are deposits composed of cholesterol and other lipids (fats), connective tissue, and muscle

tissue. The plaques grow and calcify into a hard, bony substance that thickens the arterial walls (Kharbanda & MacAllister, 2005). This process also involves inflammation (Abi-Saleh et al., 2008). The formation of plaques and the resulting occlusion of the arteries are called **atherosclerosis**, as shown in **Figure 9.3**.

A related but different problem is **arteriosclerosis**, or the loss of the arteries' elasticity. The beating of the heart pushes blood through the arteries with great force, and arterial elasticity allows adaptation to this pressure. Loss of elasticity tends to make the cardiovascular system less capable of tolerating increases in cardiac blood volume. Hence, a potential danger exists during strenuous exercise for people with arteriosclerosis.

The formation of arterial plaques (atherosclerosis) and the "hardening" of the arteries (arteriosclerosis) often occur together. Both can affect any artery in the cardiovascular system, but when the coronary arteries are affected, the heart's oxygen supply may be threatened.

Coronary Artery Disease

Coronary artery disease (CAD) refers to damage to the coronary arteries, typically through the processes of atherosclerosis and arteriosclerosis. No clear visible outward symptoms accompany the buildup of plaques in the coronary arteries. CAD can develop while a person remains totally unaware of its progress. In CAD, the plaques narrow the arteries and restrict the supply of blood to the myocardium. Deposits of plaque may also rupture and form blood clots, which can obstruct an artery. If such an obstruction deprives the heart of oxygen, the heart will not function properly. Restriction of blood flow is called **ischemia**.

Coronary heart disease (CHD) refers to any damage to the myocardium because of insufficient blood supply. Complete blockage of either coronary artery shuts off the blood flow and thus the oxygen supply to the myocardium. Like other tissue, the myocardium cannot survive without oxygen; therefore, coronary blockage results in the death of myocardial tissue, an infarction. **Myocardial infarction** is the medical term for the condition commonly referred to as a heart attack. During myocardial infarction, the damage may be so extensive as to completely disrupt the heartbeat. In less severe cases, heart contractions may become less effective. The signals for a myocardial infarction include a feeling of weakness or dizziness combined with nausea, cold sweating, difficulty in breathing, and

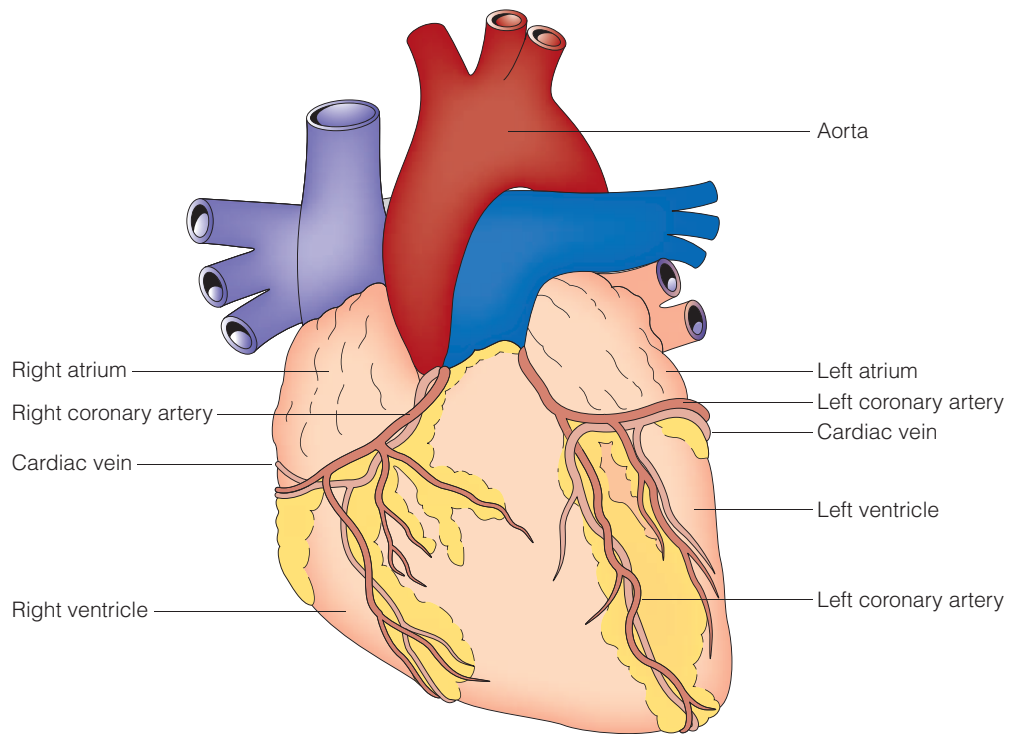


FIGURE 9.2 Heart (myocardium) with coronary arteries and veins.

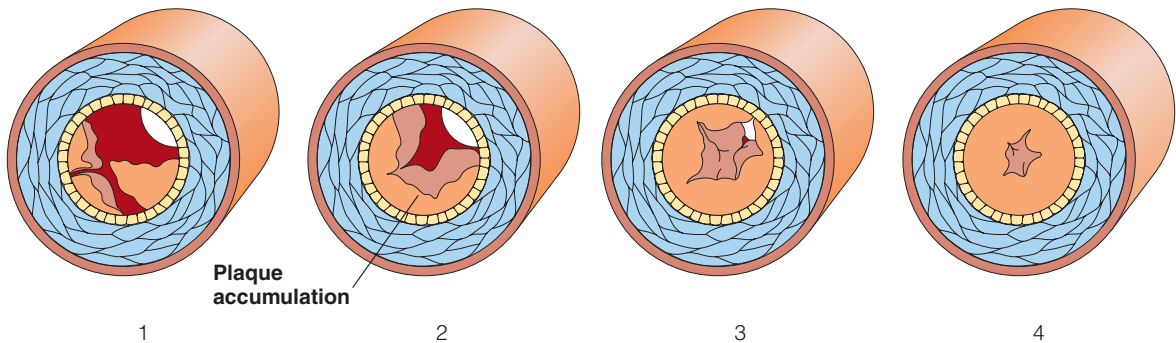


FIGURE 9.3 Progressive atherosclerosis.

a sensation of crushing or squeezing pain in the chest, arms, shoulders, jaw, or back. Rapid loss of consciousness or death may occur, but the victim sometimes remains quite alert throughout the experience. The severity of symptoms depends on the extent of damage to the heart muscle.

In those people who survive a myocardial infarction (more than half do), the damaged portion of the myocardium will not regrow or repair itself. Instead,

scar tissue forms at the infarcted area. Scar tissue does not have the elasticity and function of healthy tissue, so a heart attack lessens the capacity of the heart to pump blood efficiently. A myocardial infarction can limit the type and vigor of activities that a person can safely do, prompting the need for some lifestyle changes. The coronary artery disease that caused a first attack can cause another, but future infarctions are not a certainty.

The process of **cardiac rehabilitation** may involve psychologists, who help cardiac patients adjust their lifestyle to minimize risk factors and lessen the chances of future attacks. Because heart disease is the most frequent cause of death in the United States, preventing heart attacks and furnishing cardiac rehabilitation are major tasks for the health care system.

A less serious result of restriction of the blood supply to the myocardium is **angina pectoris**, a disorder with symptoms of crushing pain in the chest and difficulty in breathing. Angina is usually precipitated by exercise or stress, as these conditions increase demand on the heart. With oxygen restriction, the reserve capacity of the cardiovascular system is reduced, and heart disease becomes evident. The uncomfortable symptoms of angina rarely last more than a few minutes, but angina is a sign of obstruction in the coronary arteries.

This procedure replaces the blocked portion of the coronary artery (or arteries) with grafts of healthy arteries (see **Figure 9.4**). Bypass surgery is expensive, carries some risk of death, and may not extend the patient's life significantly, but it is generally successful in relieving angina and improving quality of life.

Stroke

Atherosclerosis and arteriosclerosis can also affect the arteries serving the head and neck, thereby restricting the blood supply to the brain. In other words, the same disease process that causes CAD and CHD may affect the brain. Any obstruction in the arteries of the brain will restrict or completely stop the flow of blood to the area of the brain served by that portion of the system. Oxygen deprivation causes the death of brain tissue within three to five minutes. This damage to the brain resulting from lack of oxygen is called a **stroke**, the fifth most frequent cause of death in the United States (Xu et al., 2020). But strokes have other causes as well, for example, a bubble of air (air embolism), an infection that impedes blood flow in the brain, or a congenital malformation of an artery.

The weakening of artery walls associated with arteriosclerosis may lead to an **aneurysm**, a sac formed by the ballooning of a weakened artery wall, or this weakened artery wall may be a congenital problem. Aneurysms may burst, causing a **hemorrhagic stroke** in which blood leaves the artery and pours into the brain (see **Figure 9.5**).

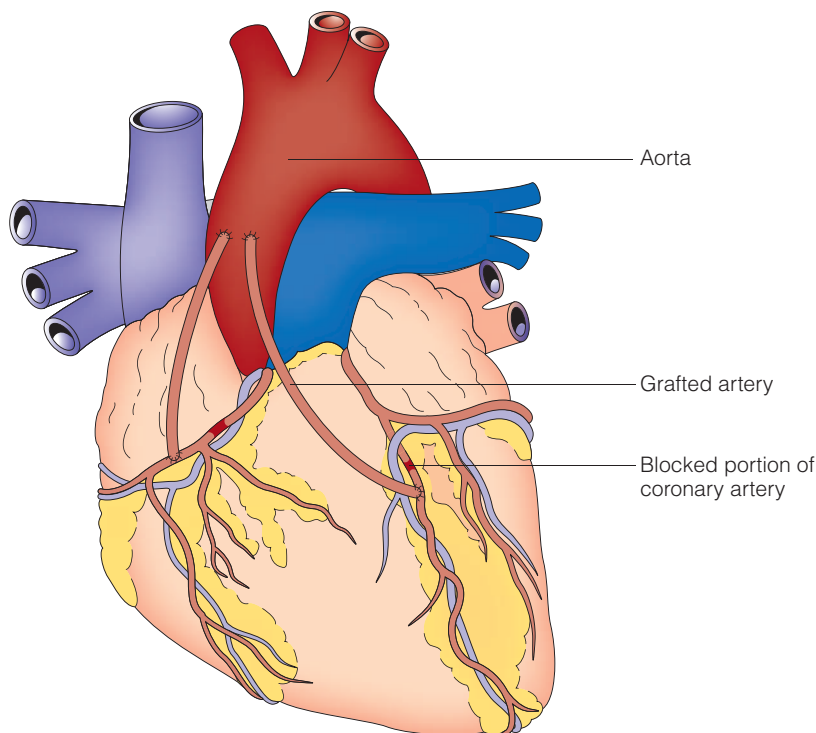


FIGURE 9.4 Coronary bypass.

Emilia Clarke's aneurysm was mostly likely not caused by arteriosclerosis; individuals of her age rarely have arteriosclerosis, but her stroke was a hemorrhagic stroke. An aneurysm in her brain burst.

A stroke can damage neurons in the brain, and these neurons have no capacity to replace themselves. Most commonly, some of the neurons devoted to a particular function (such as speech production) are lost, impairing brain function, as Emilia Clarke experienced. The extent of the loss is related to the amount of damage to the area; more extensive damage results in greater impairment. Damage may be so extensive—or in such a critical area—as to bring

about immediate death or damage may be so slight as to go unnoticed. Emilia Clarke experienced intense pain from the burst aneurysm, and within a few minutes, she realized that her brain was damaged (Clarke, 2019).

Blood Pressure

When the heart pumps blood, the force must be substantial to power circulation for an entire cycle through the body and back to the heart. In a healthy cardiovascular system, the pressure in the arteries is not a problem because arteries are quite elastic. In a

A common stroke

is caused by a clot. Most often, as in this illustration, the clot forms where an artery has been narrowed by fatty deposits.

A hemorrhagic stroke

is caused by bleeding in the brain due to a rupture of a weakened artery.

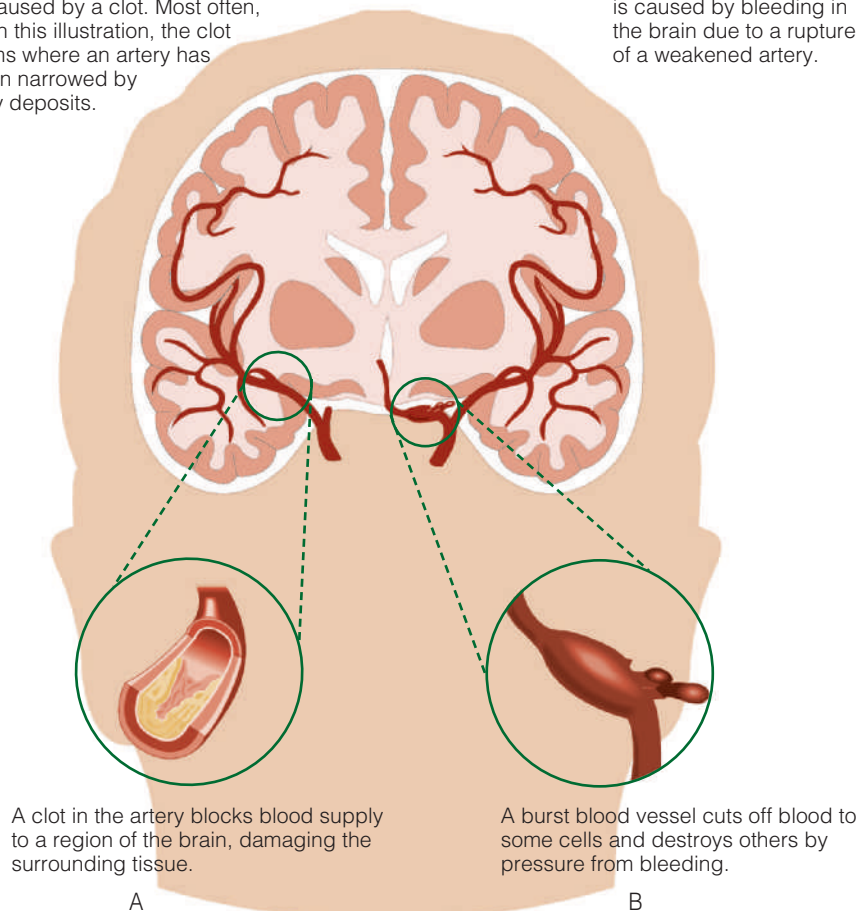


FIGURE 9.5 There are two types of strokes: Common strokes are caused by blockage of an artery; hemorrhagic strokes are caused by the bursting of an artery in the brain.

Source: *An invitation to health* (7th ed., p. 379), by D. Hales, 1997, Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. From HALEY, *Invitation to Health*, 7E.

cardiovascular system diseased by atherosclerosis and arteriosclerosis, however, the pressure of the blood in the arteries can produce serious consequences. The narrowing of the arteries that occurs in atherosclerosis and the loss of elasticity that characterizes arteriosclerosis both tend to raise blood pressure. In addition, these disease processes make the cardiovascular system less capable of adapting to the demands of heavy exercise and stress.

Blood pressure measurements are usually expressed by two numbers: The first number represents **systolic pressure**, the pressure generated by the heart's contraction. The second number represents **diastolic pressure**, or the pressure experienced between contractions, reflecting the elasticity of the vessel walls. Both numbers are expressed in millimeters (mm) of mercury (Hg), as original measurements of blood pressure were obtained by determining how high mercury would rise in a glass column by the pressure of blood in circulation.

Blood pressure elevates through several mechanisms. Some elevations in blood pressure are normal and even adaptive. Temporary activation of the sympathetic nervous system, for example, increases heart rate and also causes constriction of the blood vessels, both of which raise blood pressure. Other elevations in blood pressure, however, are neither normal nor adaptive—they are symptoms of CVD.

Millions of people in the United States have **hypertension**—that is, abnormally high blood pressure. This “silent” illness is the single best predictor of both heart attack and stroke, but it can also cause eye damage and kidney failure (see [Figure 9.6](#)). **Essential hypertension** refers to a chronic elevation of blood pressure, which has both genetic and environmental causes (Staessen et al., 2003). This condition affects *one-third* of people in the United States and other developed countries, for a total of over 100 million in the United States (NCHS, 2019) and 1 billion worldwide (Roger et al., 2012). It is strongly related to aging but also to factors such as African American ancestry, weight, sodium intake, tobacco use, and lack of exercise.

[Table 9.1](#) shows the ranges for normal blood pressure, prehypertension, and Stage 1 and Stage 2 hypertension. Despite beliefs to the contrary, hypertension does not have easily noticeable symptoms, so people with hypertension can have dangerously elevated blood pressure and remain completely unaware of their vulnerability to heart attack and stroke.

In younger individuals, high diastolic pressure is most strongly related to cardiovascular risk, but in older individuals, elevated systolic pressure is a better predictor (Staessen et al., 2003). Each 20-mmHg increase in systolic blood pressure doubles the risk of CVD (Roger et al., 2012). Systolic pressure that exceeds 200 mmHg presents a danger of rupture in the arterial walls (Berne & Levy, 2000). Diastolic hypertension tends to result in vascular damage that may injure organs served by the affected vessels, most commonly the kidneys, the liver, the pancreas, the brain, and the retinas.

Because the underlying cause of essential hypertension is complex and not fully understood, no treatment exists that will remedy its basic cause. Treatment tends to be oriented toward drugs or changes in behavior and lifestyle that can lower blood pressure (Unger et al., 2020). Because part of the treatment of hypertension involves behavioral changes, health psychologists play an important role in encouraging behaviors such as controlling weight, maintaining a regular exercise program, and restricting sodium intake. Adherence to these behaviors is important for controlling blood pressure. Unfortunately, adherence to medications is notoriously poor for patients with hypertension (Unger et al., 2020).

IN SUMMARY

The cardiovascular system consists of the heart and blood vessels. The heart pumps blood, which circulates throughout the body, supplying oxygen and removing waste products. The coronary arteries supply blood to the heart itself, and when atherosclerosis affects these arteries, coronary artery disease occurs. In this disease process, plaques form within the arteries, restricting the blood supply to the heart muscle. The restriction can cause angina pectoris, with symptoms of chest pain and difficulty in breathing. Blocked coronary arteries can also lead to a myocardial infarction (heart attack). When the oxygen supply to the brain is disrupted, stroke occurs, as it did for Emilia Clarke. Stroke can affect any part of the brain and can vary in severity from minor to fatal. Hypertension—high blood pressure—is a predictor of both heart attack and stroke. Both behavioral and medical treatments can lower hypertension as well as other risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

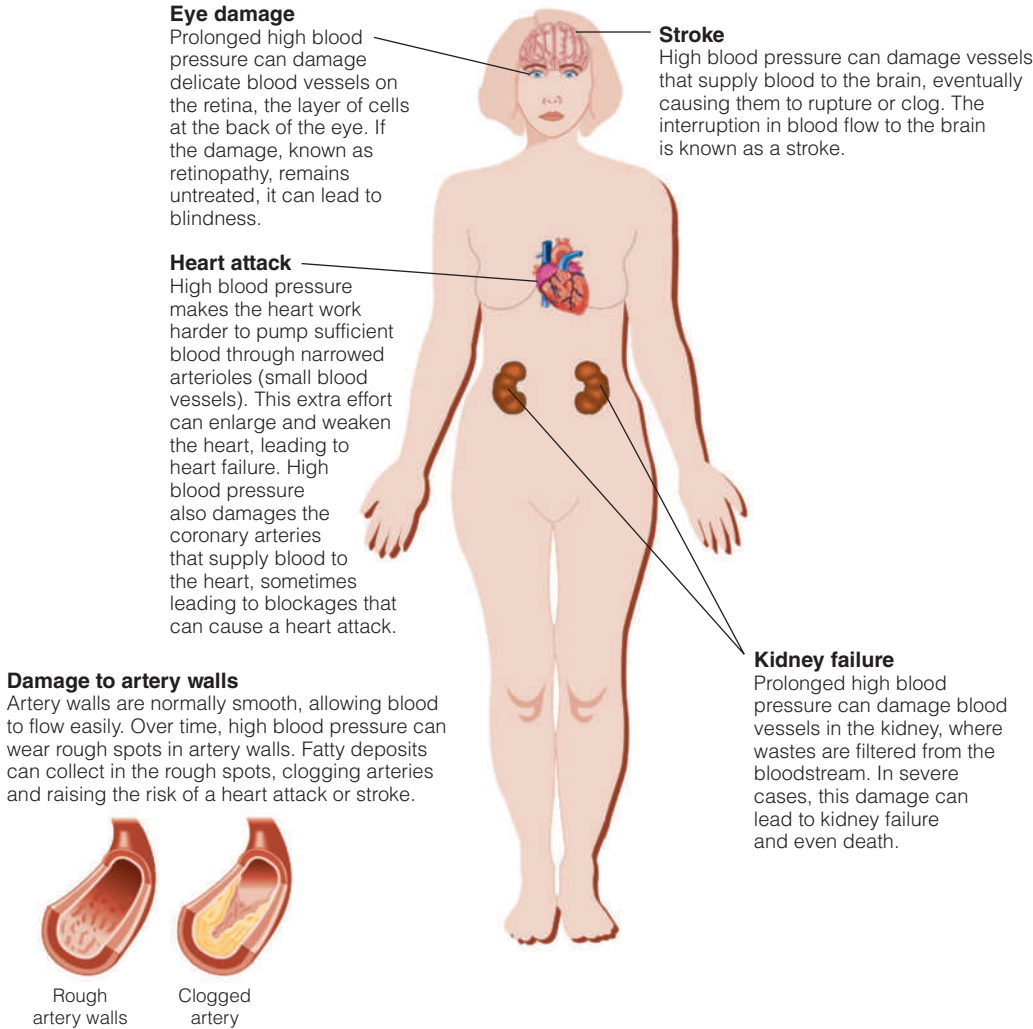


FIGURE 9.6 The consequences of high blood pressure.

Source: *An invitation to health* (7th ed., p. 370), by D. Hales, 1997, Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. From HALE, *Invitation to Health*, 7E.

TABLE 9.1 Ranges of Blood Pressure (Expressed in mm Hg)

	Systolic		Diastolic
Normal	<120	and	<80
Prehypertension	120–129	and	<80
Stage 1 hypertension	130–139	or	80–89
Stage 2 hypertension	≥140	or	≥90

Source: American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association Task Force on Clinical Practice Guidelines. *Highlights from the 2017 guideline for the prevention, detection, evaluation, and management of high blood pressure in adults*. Table 1.

Retrieved from https://professional.heart.org/idc/groups/ahamh-public/_@wcm/@sop/@smd/documents/downloadable/ucm_497445.pdf

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Describe the physiology of Emeila Clark’s brain and the process that resulted in her stroke.

2. Construct a profile of a person who is at high risk for a heart attack, including physiological and behavioral details.

9-2 The Changing Rates of Cardiovascular Disease

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

9-4 Discuss the two factors that are the most important reasons for the dramatic decrease in cardiovascular disease over the past 75 years in the United States

The current mortality rate from CVD for people in the United States is lower than it was in 1920. However,

between 1920 and 2002, the death rates changed dramatically. **Figure 9.7** reveals a sharp rise in CVD deaths from 1920 until the 1950s and 1960s, followed by a decline that continues to the present day. Currently, nearly 30% of all deaths in the United States are from CVD (Kochanek et al., 2019).

In 1920, the rate of deaths due to heart disease was similar for women and men. Overall, the rates of death from CVD remain similar, but the pattern of deaths began to differ when CVD rates began to rise. During the mid-20th century, men died from CVD at younger ages than women, creating a gender gap in heart disease.

Reasons for the Decline in Death Rates

The decline in cardiac mortality in the United States is due largely to two causes: improved emergency coronary care and changes in risk factors for CVD (Ford et al., 2007; Wise, 2000). Beginning in the 1960s, many people in the United States began to change their life-style. They began to smoke less, be more aware of their

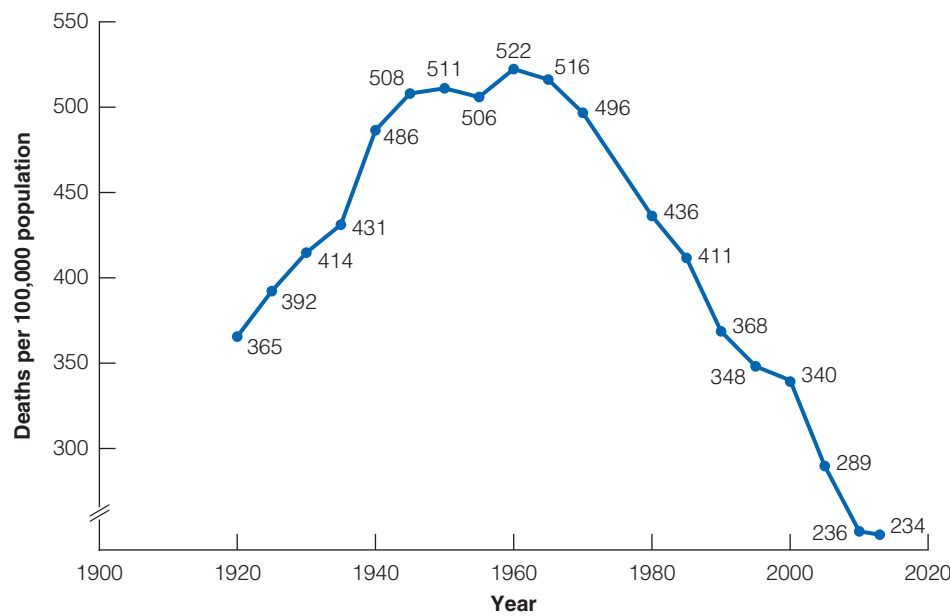


FIGURE 9.7 Death rates for cardiovascular disease per 100,000 population, United States, 1920–2018.

Source: U.S. Public Health Service, *Vital Statistics of the United States*, annual, Vol. I and Vol. II (1900–1970); U.S. National Center for Health Statistics, *Vital Statistics of the United States*, annual (1971–2001); *National Vital Statistics Report*, monthly (2002–2005). Retrieved from <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0922292.html>; *National Vital Statistics Report* (2016). Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr64/nvsr64_02.pdf; Mortality in the United States, 2018. *NCHS Data Brief*. No. 355. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db355.htm>

blood pressure, control serum cholesterol, watch their weight, and follow a regular exercise program.

Publicity from two monumental research studies prompted these lifestyle changes. The first was the Framingham Heart Study that began to issue reports during the 1960s, implicating cigarette smoking, high cholesterol, hypertension, a sedentary lifestyle, and obesity as risk factors in CVD (Levy & Brink, 2005). The second study was the highly publicized 1964 Surgeon General's report (U.S. Public Health Service [USPHS], 1964), which found a strong association between cigarette smoking and heart disease. Many people became aware of these studies and began to alter their way of living.

Although these lifestyle changes closely parallel declining heart disease death rates, they offer no proof of a causal link between behavior changes and the drop in cardiovascular mortality. During this same period, medical care and technology continued to improve, and many cardiac patients who in earlier years would have died were saved by better and faster treatment. Which factor—lifestyle changes or better medical care—contributed more to the declining death rate from heart disease? The answer is both. About 47% of the decline in CHD was due to improvements in treatment and 44% to changes in risk factors (Ford et al., 2007). Thus, the declining rate of death from heart disease is due about as much to changes in behavior and lifestyle as it is to improved medical care.

Heart Disease Throughout the World

Heart disease is the leading cause of death, not only in the United States but also worldwide. The total number of deaths from heart disease and stroke accounts for about 30% of all deaths (WHO, 2017). The United States is only one of many high-income Western countries that have seen lifestyle changes and dramatic reductions in cardiovascular deaths among its population, but most worldwide CVD deaths occur in middle- and low-income countries (WHO, 2017).

In Finland, CVD rates fell more than 70% from the 1970s through the 1990s (Puska et al., 1998). Part of this decrease was the result of a countrywide effort to change risk factors. That effort began with a community intervention that targeted an area of Finland with particularly high rates of CVD and attempted to change diet, hypertension, and smoking. The program's success

led to a nation-wide expansion of the project. This lowering of risk factors was responsible for much of the reduction (Vartiainen, 2018).

In contrast, during decades when rates of CVD were dropping in many countries, rates of heart disease were increasing in countries that were once part of the Soviet Union (Weidner, 2000; Weidner & Cain, 2003). This epidemic affected middle-aged men more than other groups, and the gender gap in heart disease was larger in Russia and other former Soviet republics than in most all other countries. In some countries in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, coronary heart disease accounted for 80% of deaths. The reasons for this plague of heart disease are not completely understood, but the high rates occurred during a time of political and economic crisis, and lack of social support, high levels of stress, smoking, and alcohol abuse are factors that may have been contributors to the increased rates of CVD (Weidner & Cain, 2003). That situation has improved (Pogosova, & Sokolova, 2017). Increased social stability and a national initiative to decrease and manage CVD risk factors have resulted in lowering of CVD deaths.

Heart disease and stroke have become the leading causes of death in low- and middle-income countries (GBD 2017 Causes of Death Collaborators, 2018). As tobacco smoking, obesity, physical inactivity, and poor dietary patterns in these countries become more like those of high-income nations, CVD has increased in these less wealthy nations. Thus, the worldwide burden of CVD is immense, representing the leading cause of years of life lost in the world.

IN SUMMARY

Since the mid-1960s, deaths from coronary artery disease and stroke have declined dramatically in the United States and most (but not all) other high-income nations. Although some of that decline is a result of better and faster coronary care, lifestyle changes account for about 50% of this decrease. In low-income countries around the world, the opposite has occurred—smoking and obesity have increased and physical activity has decreased. These habits have increased risks for CVD. In addition, the availability of medical care for CVD is lower in these countries, which will lead to a growing rate of CVD in these countries in the coming years.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Analyze the factors that have contributed to different rates of CVD over the past 50 years in countries that have shown an increase and those in which CVD rates have fallen.

9-3 Risk Factors in Cardiovascular Disease

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 9-5** Explain the difference between a risk factor and a cause for a disorder
- 9-6** Describe the differences between the classification of risks as inherent and physiological conditions
- 9-7** After examining the impact of each of the categories of behavioral risks on the development of CVD, create a ranking of those behavioral risks from lowest to highest impact
- 9-8** Describe three ways that the psychosocial factors of educational level, income, and social support interact to create vulnerability to stress, anxiety, and depression
- 9-9** Trace the evolution of the Type A behavior pattern to the Type D personality

Research links several risk factors to the development of CVD. In Chapter 2, we defined a *risk factor* as any characteristic or condition that occurs with greater frequency in people with a disease than in people free from that disease. The risk factor approach does not identify the cause of a disease. Nor does it allow a precise prediction of who will succumb to disease and who will remain healthy. The risk factor approach simply yields information concerning which conditions are associated—directly or indirectly—with a particular disease or disorder.

The risk factor approach to predicting heart disease began with the Framingham Heart Study in 1948, an investigation of more than 5,000 people in the town of Framingham, Massachusetts (Levy & Brink, 2005). The study was a prospective design; thus, all participants were free of heart disease at the beginning of the

study. The original plan was to follow these people for 20 years to study heart disease and the factors related to its development. The results proved so valuable that the study has continued now for more than 50 years and includes both children and grandchildren of the original participants.

At the time of their discovery, medicine had not considered many typical American lifestyle behaviors to be particularly dangerous (Levy & Brink, 2005). Prompted by the growing epidemic of heart disease in the 1950s, the Framingham study revealed that these risk factors are reliably related to the development of heart disease and stroke.

Several large-scale studies followed the Framingham study. These include the Nurses' Health Study, a long-term epidemiological study of women's health that confirms the link between several risk factors and women's risk for CVD (Oh et al., 2005). The largest study of cardiovascular health to date is the 52-country INTERHEART Study (Yusuf et al., 2004), which matched over 15,000 people who experienced a heart attack with nearly 15,000 similar people who had not. This case-control study examined a host of other potential risk factors and the extent to which risk factors for CVD are similar across countries. Thus, much of our knowledge about the risk factors for major cardiovascular problems comes from the Framingham, Nurses' Health, and INTERHEART studies.

Cardiovascular risk factors include those that are inherent, those that arise from physiological conditions, those that arise from behavior, and a variety of psychosocial factors.

Inherent Risk Factors

Inherent risk factors result from genetic or physical conditions that cannot be readily modified. Studies of genetic factors in CVD have found complex relationships (Erdman et al., 2018), including over 160 gene loci associated with coronary artery disease. The way these genes interact and the possibility that environmental factors interact with the genetic information to alter gene expression suggest that very complex mechanisms are operating.

Although inherent risk factors cannot be changed, people with these risk factors are not necessarily destined to develop CVD. Identifying people with inherent risk factors enables these high-risk individuals to minimize their overall risk profile by controlling the things that they can, such as hypertension, smoking,

and diet. Inherent risk factors for CVD include advancing age, family history, gender, and ethnic background.

Advancing Age Advancing age is the primary risk factor for CVD, as well as for cancer and many other diseases. As people become older, their risk for cardiovascular death rises sharply. **Figure 9.8** shows that for every 10-year increase in age, both men and women more than double their chances of dying of CVD. For example, men 85 and older are about 2.7 times as likely to die of CVD as men between the ages of 75 and 84, and women 85 and older are about 3.7 times as likely as women 75 to 84 to die from CVD.

Family History Family history is also an inherent risk factor for CVD. People with a history of CVD in their family are more likely to die of heart disease than those with no such history. Similarly, people with a parent who has suffered a heart attack are more likely to suffer a heart attack themselves (Chow et al., 2011). This familial risk is likely to occur through the action of many genes and their interactions with environmental factors in people's lives (Schunert et al., 2018). Like other inherent

risk factors, genes cannot be altered through lifestyle changes, but people with a family history of heart disease can lower their risk by changing their lifestyle.

Gender Although gender is an inherent risk factor, many behaviors and social conditions are related to gender. Thus, the differing risk for women and men may or may not be inherent.

In 1920, the rate of deaths due to heart disease was similar for women and men. Overall, the rates of death from CVD remain similar, but the pattern of deaths began to differ when CVD rates began to rise. During the middle of the 20th century, men died from CVD at younger ages than women, creating a gender gap in heart disease.

As **Figure 9.8** shows, this gender gap continues to exist. Men have a higher rate of death from CVD than women, and this discrepancy shows most prominently during the middle-age years. After that age, the percentage of women's deaths due to CVD increases sharply, and a larger number of older women than older men die of CVD; nonetheless, the rate of death from CVD remains higher for men.

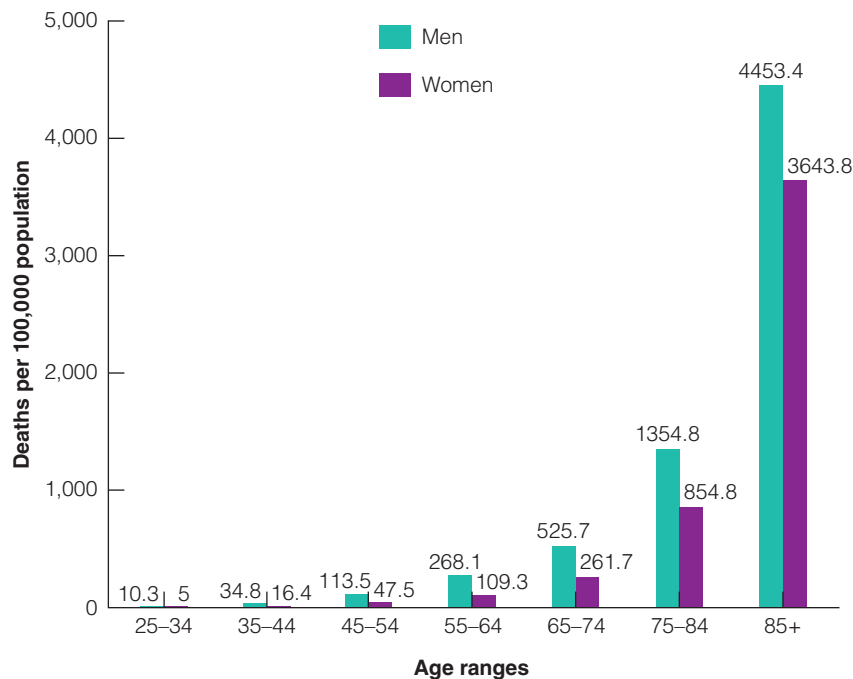


FIGURE 9.8 Mortality rates for diseases of the heart by age and gender, United States, 2014.

Source: *Health, United States, 2017*, by National Center for Health Statistics, 2017, Table 22. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/has/2017/022.pdf>

What factors explain this gender gap? Both physiology and lifestyle contribute (Pilote et al., 2007). Before menopause, women experience a lower rate of CVD than men. At one time, estrogen was believed to furnish protection, but the failure to produce any benefit in a large-scale hormone replacement trial engendered doubt (Writing Group for the Women's Health Initiative Investigators, 2002). A more recent focus has been on androgens, including the possibility that these hormones may involve both protections and risks for both men and women (Chistiakov et al., 2018).

However, lifestyle is responsible for much of the gender gap in heart disease. Across the world, men tend to experience a heart attack at an earlier age than women do, and this difference is explained by men's higher rates of unhealthy lifestyle factors during their younger years (Anand et al., 2008). Furthermore, the gender gap is particularly large in some countries. Russia has the widest gender gap in life expectancy in the world—women can expect to outlive men by an average of 11 years—and most of the discrepancy comes from higher rates of CVD among men (CIA, 2020). Russian men's health habits include more smoking and drinking, and they show poorer coping skills for dealing with stress. In other countries, such as Iceland and Norway, the gender difference in CVD rate is small (CIA, 2020). The findings that gender differences in CVD mortality are much greater in some countries than in others suggests that behavioral factors, rather than inherent biological differences, explain the CVD mortality discrepancy between men and women.

Ethnic Background A fourth inherent risk for CVD is ethnic background. In the United States, African Americans have more than a 30% greater risk for cardiovascular death than White Americans, whereas Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans have lower rates (Kochanek et al., 2019). The increased risk for African Americans may be related to social, economic, or behavioral factors rather than to any biological basis, because the INTERHEART Study (Yusuf et al., 2004) indicated that the risk factors for heart disease are the same for people in countries around the world. Thus, ethnic differences in heart disease are likely due to ethnic differences in levels of known risk factors.

African Americans follow that pattern; they have higher levels of risk factors for heart disease than Whites, Hispanics, Asians, and Native Americans. The

strongest risk for African Americans is high blood pressure (Cunningham et al., 2017), but psychosocial risks such as low income and low educational level also have a major impact (Karlman et al., 2005; Pilote et al., 2007). The higher rates of cardiovascular death among African Americans may be due to their higher rate of hypertension. Their higher rate of hypertension may be partly due to greater cardiac reactivity, as a possible result of ongoing experiences of racial discrimination. Even threats of discrimination can raise blood pressure in African Americans (Blascovich et al., 2001). The tendency to react to stress and threats of stress with increased cardiac reactivity may arise from years of racial discrimination, discrimination most likely to be experienced by dark-skinned people. For example, Elizabeth Klonoff and Hope Landrine (2000) found that dark-skinned African Americans were 11 times more likely than light-skinned African Americans to experience frequent racial discrimination. Thus, racial discrimination seems to be a factor in the increased blood pressure levels among African Americans, but these responses are classified as psychosocial risks that relate to ethnicity rather than as a risk that is inherent in ethnic differences.

Physiological Conditions

A second category of risk factors in CVD includes the physiological conditions of hypertension, serum cholesterol level, problems in glucose metabolism, and inflammation.

Hypertension Other than advancing age, hypertension is the single most important risk factor for CVD, yet millions of people with high blood pressure are not aware of their vulnerability. Unlike most disorders, hypertension produces no overt symptoms, and dangerously elevated blood pressure levels commonly occur with no signals or symptoms (Unger et al., 2020).

The Framingham Heart Study provided the first solid evidence of the risks of hypertension. More recently, the 52-country INTERHEART Study confirmed the strong link between hypertension and cardiovascular problems across age, gender, ethnicity, and country of residence (Yusuf et al., 2004). As a U.S. government report stated, "The risk between BP and risk of CVD events is continuous, consistent, and independent of other risk factors. The higher the BP, the greater the chance of heart attack, heart failure, stroke, and kidney disease" (USDHHS, 2003, p. 2).

Serum Cholesterol Level A second physiological condition related to CVD is high serum cholesterol level. Cholesterol is a waxy, fatlike substance that is essential for human life as a component of cell membranes. *Serum* or *blood cholesterol* is the level of cholesterol circulating through the bloodstream; this level is related (but not perfectly related) to *dietary cholesterol*, or the amount of cholesterol in one's food. Dietary cholesterol comes from animal fats and oils but not from vegetables or vegetable products. Although cholesterol is essential for life, too much may contribute to the process of developing CVD.

After a person eats cholesterol, the bloodstream transports it as part of the process of digestion. A measurement of the amount of cholesterol carried in the serum (the liquid, cell-free part of the blood) is typically expressed in milligrams (mg) of cholesterol per deciliters (dl) of serum. Thus, a cholesterol reading of 210 means 210 mg of cholesterol per deciliter of blood serum.

However, total cholesterol in the bloodstream is not the best predictor of CVD. Cholesterol circulates in the blood in several forms of **lipoproteins**, which differ in their density and function. **Low-density lipoprotein (LDL)** carries cholesterol from the liver to the cells of the body, whereas **high-density lipoprotein (HDL)** carries cholesterol from the tissues back to the liver. The Framingham researchers found that LDL was positively related to CVD, whereas HDL was negatively related. Subsequent research supported this relationship. High-density lipoprotein actually seems to offer some protection against CVD, whereas LDL seems to promote atherosclerosis. For these reasons, LDL is sometimes referred to as “bad cholesterol” and HDL as “good cholesterol.” Indeed, women's higher levels of HDL may be a partial explanation for the gender gap in heart disease during middle age (Pilote et al., 2007).

Total cholesterol (TC) is determined by adding the values for HDL, LDL, and 20% of very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL), also called **triglycerides**. A low ratio of total cholesterol to HDL is more desirable than a high ratio. A ratio of less than 4.5 to 1 is healthier than a ratio of 6.0 to 1; that is, people whose HDL level is about 20% to 22% of total cholesterol have a reduced risk of CVD. Most authorities now believe that a favorable balance of total cholesterol to HDL is more critical than total cholesterol in avoiding CVD, and much recent research has focused on lowering LDL via dietary changes or pharmaceuticals known as *statins* (Yebo et al., 2019), which can be effective in lowering cholesterol levels and risk of cardiovascular events. **Table 9.2** presents the desirable ranges for total cholesterol and each of the subfractions, along with a desirable and an undesirable profile.

Research on cholesterol suggests several conclusions. First, cholesterol intake and blood cholesterol are related. Second, the relationship between dietary intake of cholesterol and blood cholesterol relates strongly to habitual diet—that is, eating habits maintained over many years. Lowering blood cholesterol level by changing diet is possible, but the process is neither quick nor easy. Third, the ratio of total cholesterol to HDL is probably more important than total cholesterol alone, but lowering LDL is an important goal.

Problems in Glucose Metabolism A third physiological risk factor for CVD comes from problems with glucose metabolism. The most obvious of such problems is diabetes, a condition in which glucose cannot be taken into the cells because of problems in producing or using insulin. When this situation occurs, glucose remains in the blood at abnormally high levels. People who have juvenile onset (Type 1) diabetes are more likely to develop CVD, and longer duration problems with glucose metabolism increase the risk (Pambianco,

TABLE 9.2 Desirable Ranges for Serum Cholesterol, Along with Examples of Favorable and Risky Profiles

Cholesterol Component	Desirable Range	Good Profile	Risky Profile
HDL cholesterol	>60 mg/dl	70	40
LDL cholesterol	<100 mg/dl	60	180
Triglycerides	<150 mg/dl	125	250
	(20% of VLDL)	25 (= 125 × 0.20)	50 (= 250 × 0.20)
Total cholesterol	<200 mg/dl	70 + 60 + 25 = 155	40 + 180 + 50 = 270
Cholesterol/HDL ratio	<4.00	160/70 = 2.21	270/40 = 6.75

Costacou, & Orchard, 2007). Type 2 diabetes also elevates the risk of CVD (Sobel & Schneider, 2005). (We discuss the risks of diabetes more fully in Chapter 11.)

Many people have problems with glucose metabolism that do not qualify as diabetes but may still create CVD risk. One study (Khaw et al., 2004) showed that people who have problems in glucose metabolism (but not diabetes) had greater risks for CVD development or death than those with normal glucose metabolism. Such problems in glucose metabolism constitute one of the factors in the *metabolic syndrome*, a collection of factors that elevate the risk for CVD (Grundy, 2016; Johnson & Weinstock, 2006). Other components of metabolic syndrome include excess abdominal fat, elevated blood pressure, and problems with the levels of two components of cholesterol. People with metabolic syndrome are twice as likely to experience cardiovascular health problems as those without the syndrome (Mottillo et al., 2010). In a study testing the components of the metabolic syndrome (Anderson et al., 2004), problems in insulin metabolism were more strongly related to arterial damage than the other components.

Inflammation As unlikely as it may sound, atherosclerosis results in part from the body's natural inflammatory response. As you learned in Chapter 6, inflammation is a nonspecific immune response. When a tissue sustains damage, white blood cells (such as granulocytes and macrophages) migrate to the site of the injury and defend against potential invaders by engulfing them through the process of phagocytosis. When an artery is injured or infected, these white blood cells migrate toward and accumulate on the artery wall. When a person's diet is high in cholesterol, the "diet" of these white blood cells is likewise high in cholesterol. Arterial plaques—the precursors to atherosclerosis—are simply accumulations of cholesterol-filled white blood cells. Inflammation influences not only the development of plaques but also their stability, making them more likely to rupture and cause a heart attack or stroke (Abi-Saleh et al., 2008).

Because chronic inflammation may raise the risk for the development of atherosclerosis (Pilote et al., 2007), factors that produce chronic inflammation may also increase the risk for CVD. Stress and depression are two factors that may contribute to inflammation (Miller & Blackwell, 2006) and are two known risk factors for CVD. Indeed, inflammatory processes account for some, but not all, of the association between

depression and increased risk of cardiovascular mortality (Kop et al., 2010). Metabolic syndrome also shows a strong relationship to inflammation (Welty et al., 2016), suggesting that these conditions interact or have some common pathways for causing damage to the cardiovascular system.

Similarly, any factor that reduces inflammation may reduce risk for CVD. For example, aspirin—an anti-inflammatory pain reliever—lowers the risk of a heart attack. Thus, the findings about the risks from inflammation explain why taking aspirin lowers the risk of heart attack, and the findings about stress and depression suggest that other behavioral factors may present risks, as well as ways to protect against CVD. These findings also help explain why taking care of your teeth and gums may also keep your heart healthy (see the Would You Believe . . . ? box).

Behavioral Factors

Behavioral factors constitute a third risk category for CVD; the most important of these lifestyle factors are smoking, diet, and physical activity. For example, women who do not smoke, eat a diet high in fiber and low in saturated fat, are not overweight, and are physically active have an 80% lower risk for coronary heart disease than other people (Stampfer et al., 2000)! Each of these behaviors—smoking, food choice, weight maintenance, and physical activity—is related to CVD.

Smoking Cigarette smoking is the leading behavioral risk factor for cardiovascular death in the United States and a major contributor to deaths throughout the world (American Cancer Society, 2020; USDHHS, 2010c). In the United States, cardiovascular deaths due to smoking have declined (Mensah et al., 2017). For example, between 1950 and 1996, cardiovascular deaths decreased by 56%, and 12% of that decrease was due to lower rates of smoking. However, such a dramatic decline has not occurred in all parts of the world—smoking continues at higher rates in many other countries than in the United States. Smoking accounts for about 35% of the risk for heart attack worldwide (Yusuf et al., 2004), which translates into more than a million deaths per year.

People who currently smoke are three times more likely to suffer a heart attack than people who never smoked (Teo et al., 2006). Fortunately, quitting smoking does reduce the risk of heart attack; within three years of quitting, former smokers are only twice as likely to

suffer a heart attack as those who never smoke (Teo et al., 2006). However, the risks of past smoking do not disappear completely, as a small risk for heart attack persists even 20 years after a person quits. Even when tobacco is not inhaled, it still presents risks, as chewing tobacco also increases the risk of heart attack. Passive smoking—or “secondhand” smoking—is not as dangerous as personal tobacco use, but exposure to environmental tobacco smoke raises the risk for CVD by about as much as 28% (Khoramdad et al., 2019). Thus, tobacco contributes to increased risk for cardiovascular problems in a number of ways.

Weight and Diet Obesity and diet also increase risk for CVD. Although the dangers of obesity seem obvious, the evaluation of obesity as an independent risk for CVD is difficult. The main problem is that obesity is related to other risks, such as blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, total cholesterol, LDL, and triglycerides (Ashton et al., 2001). A high degree of abdominal fat is a risk factor for heart attack in men (Smith, et al.,

2005), in women (Iribarren et al., 2006), and in people worldwide (Yusuf et al., 2005).

The dietary choices that people make may either increase or decrease their chances of developing CVD, depending on the foods they eat. Results from two large-scale studies—the Framingham Study (Levy & Brink, 2005) and the INTERHEART Study (Iqbal et al., 2008)—show that diets heavy in saturated fats are positively related to CVD and heart attack risks. These high-fat foods have an obvious link to serum cholesterol levels, but other nutrients may also affect CVD risks.

For example, sodium intake contributes to high blood pressure (one of the major risks for CVD; Stamler et al., 2003), and some individuals seem to be more sensitive to the effects of sodium intake than others (Brooks et al., 2005). Potassium intake, however, seems to decrease the risk, which brings up the question: Can diet serve as protection against CVD? A growing body of results indicates that some diets, and perhaps even some foods, offer protective effects.

Would You BELIEVE...?

Chocolate May Help Prevent Heart Disease

Would you believe that chocolate—rather than being bad for you—may contain chemicals that help prevent coronary artery disease (Engler & Engler, 2006) and decrease the chance of heart failure (Gong et al., 2017)? One of the dietary components that seems to offer some protection against artery damage is a class of chemicals called **flavonoids**, which are derived primarily from fruits and vegetables (Engler & Engler, 2006). Several subcategories of flavonoids exist, each with slightly different properties. The subcategory that contains chocolate is the flavanols, which also occur in tea, red wine, grapes, and blackberries. However, all of the subcategories have been linked to health benefits, including evidence of the advantages of chocolate.

Not all chocolate contains the same amount of flavonoids, and thus,

some types of chocolate may offer more protection than others (Patel & Watson, 2018). The processing of the cacao bean, from which chocolate is made, affects the flavonoid content. Dark chocolate contains two to three times more flavonoids than milk chocolate or Dutch chocolate.

Flavonoids exert their health benefits by reducing oxidation, making them one type of antioxidant. The benefits may occur through effects on the lining of arteries (Engler & Engler, 2006). Flavonoids may be especially effective in protecting arteries against the harmful effects of low-density cholesterol and increase vascular dilation. If flavonoids protect arteries, that mechanism would explain the connection between flavanol intake and lower rates of coronary heart disease mortality (Huxley & Neil, 2003). However, chocolate consumption has also

shown cardiovascular benefits in lowering blood pressure and decreasing inflammation, both of which lower risk factors for CVD (Engler & Engler, 2006). This body of research indicates that chocolate consumption may protect against heart disease in a variety of ways. However, no dose–response relationship exists; moderate consumption lowers risk, but higher consumption does not (Patel & Watson, 2017).

Chocolate is not the only food that is rich in flavonols. High concentrations of this micronutrient also occur in green and black tea, grapes, red wine, cherries, apples, blackberries, and raspberries. Thus, chocolate may not offer unique health benefits, but legions of chocoholics would testify that its taste is unique. These devotees are overjoyed that a food that was once considered a sin may now offer salvation from heart disease.

Over more than two decades, researchers showed that diets high in fruits and vegetables predict lower CVD risks. The INTERHEART Study, for example, found that people who ate a diet high in fruits and vegetables had a lower risk of heart attack (Iqbal et al., 2008). One analysis of worldwide consumption of fruits and vegetables (Lock et al., 2005) concluded that if these levels increased to a minimal acceptable level, the rate of heart disease could be reduced by 31% and stroke by 19%.

A diet high in fish seems to offer some protection against heart disease and stroke (Iso et al., 2001; Torpy, 2006); the protective component is *omega-3 fatty acids*. Fish such as tuna, salmon, mackerel, and other high-fat fish and shellfish are high in this nutrient. However, not all fish meals offer the same protection (Mozaffarian et al., 2005). For example, baked or broiled fish is more beneficial than fried fish in decreasing the risk of stroke in older adults. The American Heart Association recommends at least two servings of fish per week (American Heart Association, 2018) based on this evidence. That advantage is balanced against the high level of mercury in some fish, which also presents risks, but the advantage outweighs the risk. However, taking supplements rather than eating fish is not a recommended practice for people attempting to avoid CVD but has some promise of protection for individuals with CVD (Siscovick et al., 2017).

Do certain vitamins or other micronutrients protect against CVD? People who eat diets high in antioxidants such as vitamin E, beta carotene or lycopene, selenium, and riboflavin show a number of health advantages, including lower levels of CVD (Stanner et al., 2004). These antioxidants protect LDL from oxidation and thus from its potentially damaging effects on the cardiovascular system. However, research findings do not show that taking supplements of these nutrients is as effective as eating a diet that contains the nutrients in high levels. Such a diet may include some surprising choices (see the Would You Believe . . . ? box).

Physical Activity Across the world, two factors consistently predict higher risk of heart attack: owning a car and owning a television (Held et al., 2012). These two factors have one thing in common: both reduce physical activity. The benefits of physical activity in lowering cardiovascular risk are clear and “irrefutable” (Warburton et al., 2006, p. 801; see Chapter 15 for a review of this evidence). Unfortunately, people’s jobs have become less physically strenuous, and many individuals do not engage in physical activity in their leisure time, creating large numbers of sedentary people in many industrialized societies.

The risks of inactivity apply to the entire life span. In the United States, children have become less

Would You BELIEVE...?

Nearly All the Risk for Stroke is Due to Modifiable Factors

In the United States, nearly 800,000 people suffer a stroke each year, and strokes are the fifth leading cause of death. Despite its prevalence and its role as a leading cause of mortality, would you believe that people’s risk for stroke is due almost entirely to **modifiable** factors?

An international team of researchers examined the medical records of 6,000 men and women from across the world (O’Donnell et al., 2010). The researchers utilized a case–control method, where 3,000

of the participants had been admitted to a hospital for a first stroke, and the other 3,000 participants had not experienced a stroke. The researchers compared the two groups to identify the extent to which a number of risk factors predicted the likelihood of stroke.

The researchers found that 10 risk factors were associated with 90% of their population’s risk of stroke! The factors that contributed to risk most strongly were hypertension, lack of physical activity, high cholesterol,

and poor diet; these four factors alone accounted for 80% of the population’s stroke risk. Other significant factors were obesity, smoking, alcohol intake, and stress. You will notice that many of these factors are the same factors that contribute to cardiovascular disease more generally. However, the role of modifiable, behavioral risk factors in disease is perhaps no more apparent than it is in the case of stroke risk.

physically active, and their sedentary lifestyle has contributed to their increasing obesity and growing risk for CVD (Wang, 2004). At the other end of the age spectrum, women over age 65 showed better health and lower CVD risks when they voluntarily engaged in exercise (Simonsick et al., 2005). Sedentary lifestyle also contributes to the metabolic syndrome, the pattern of CVD risks that includes overweight, abdominal fat, and blood glucose metabolism problems (Ekelund et al., 2005; Grundy, 2016). Thus, physical inactivity is an important behavioral risk factor for CVD.

Psychosocial Factors

A number of psychosocial factors relate to heart disease (Smith & Ruiz, 2002). These factors include education, income, marital status, social support, stress, anxiety, depression, hostility, anger, and Type D personality.

Educational Level and Income Low socioeconomic status—often assessed by low educational level and low income—are risk factors for CVD. For example, in the INTERHEART Study, low socioeconomic status emerged as a risk factor for heart attack (Rosengren et al., 2009). In particular, low education placed people at increased risk for heart attack (Cunningham et al., 2017). In many countries, educational levels are related to ethnicity, but studies in the United States (Yan et al., 2006), the Netherlands (Bos et al., 2005), and Israel (Manor et al., 2004) examined educational level within ethnic groups. The results showed that, independent of ethnicity, low educational level increased risk for CVD.

What factors link low levels of education to high levels of heart disease? One possibility is that people with low education practice fewer protective health behaviors than those with higher educational levels; they eat a less healthy diet, smoke, and lead more sedentary lives (Laaksonen et al., 2008). Indeed, in the INTERHEART Study, much of the influence of socioeconomic factors, such as education on cardiovascular risk, was explained by the modifiable lifestyle factors of smoking, physical activity, diet, and obesity (Rosengren et al., 2009).

Income level is another risk factor for CVD; people with lower incomes have higher rates of heart disease than people in the higher income brackets. A report from China (Yu et al., 2000) showed that socioeconomic level—defined as education, occupation, income, and marital status—related to cardiovascular risk factors

such as blood pressure, body mass index, and cigarette smoking. This finding is not isolated—many studies show links between socioeconomic status and health, mortality, and CVD. A cross-national study (Kim et al., 2008) revealed that in societies with a large discrepancy in income levels, individuals in the lower part of the income distribution had higher risk factors for CVD. The effect may occur through income level or social status; evidence exists for both. Income level relates to longevity in the form of a gradient, with higher income levels predicting longer life (Krantz & McCeney, 2002). Social rank and status have a variety of cardiovascular effects in many species, including humans (Sapolsky, 2004). In addition, research suggests that these socioeconomic cardiovascular risks begin to accumulate during adolescence or even childhood (Karlmanangla et al., 2005). Thus, educational level, income, and social status all show effects on the cardiovascular system and on diseases of this system.

Social Support and Marriage Prospective studies confirm that lacking social support is also a risk for CVD (Krantz & McCeney, 2002; Valtorta et al., 2016). This conclusion is consistent with the wide body of research discussed in Chapter 5 that shows the value of social support and the problems that can arise from its absence. Indeed, loneliness during childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood relates to CVD risk factors (Caspi et al., 2006), and these effects may become more serious with aging (Hawkey & Cacioppo, 2007). For example, older people who had experienced a heart attack were more likely to have another, fatal heart attack if they lived alone (Schmaltz et al., 2007).

Lack of social support may be a factor even more important in the progression of CVD. Studies that measured the progression of blockage of the coronary arteries in women (Wang et al., 2005; Wang et al., 2007) found that support at home and at work affected the progression of coronary artery blockage; high stress in either area predicted progressive blockage, whereas satisfactory support in both led to regression of arterial plaques. Another study showed that the number of people in a person's social network related to coronary mortality; CAD patients with only one to three people in their social network were nearly 2.5 times more likely to die of coronary artery disease than patients with four or more close friends (Brummett et al., 2001). Older men who were more socially involved were less likely to die of CVD than those who were more isolated (Ramsay et al., 2008).



Marriage appears to provide protection against cardiovascular disease.

Marriage should provide social support, and in general, married people are at decreased risk for cardiovascular health problems. For example, two large population studies—one in France (Empana et al., 2008) and another in China (Hu et al., 2012)—both found that married individuals were less likely to suffer a heart attack than people who were not married. In a 10-year follow-up, married men were almost half as likely to die as unmarried men (Eaker et al., 2007). However, the quality of the marital relationship may be a factor. For women, the marriage benefits depended on marital communication and quality, with poor communication increasing heart disease risk. Another study (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2008) focused specifically on marriage and found that marital quality was important; marriage was not beneficial if the individual was dissatisfied with the relationship. However, happily married people received greater benefits in the form of lower blood pressure than single people, even those with a supportive social network.

Not only spouses but also other sources of social support may reduce the risk of cardiovascular mortality. Involvement in a social network decreases the feeling of loneliness, which may be a factor that exists, even in marriages (Dafoe & Coella, 2016). Spouses or other often provide health-related support, such as encouragement for compliance with a healthy lifestyle or a medical regimen or by urging a person to seek medical care (Williams et al., 1992). These sources of social support may include friends, family, spouses, and even pets (Allen, 2003). Support may also affect CVD through its influence on the experience of stress and depression.

Stress, Anxiety, and Depression Stress, anxiety, and depression relate to CVD, but they also relate to each other (Suls & Bunde, 2005). This overlap makes independent assessment of each component difficult. However, a great deal of evidence implicates these factors in CVD. For example, the INTERHEART Study (Rosengren et al., 2004) revealed that people who had heart attacks also experienced more work and financial stress and more life events than their matched controls. In a large, prospective study of young adults in the United States, increases in work-related stress led to greater incidence of hypertension eight years later (Markovitz et al., 2004). A recent review (Dar et al., 2019) indicated that chronic stress was a risk factor for hypertension, coronary artery disease, stroke, and even sudden cardiac death.

Anxiety and depression also increase risk for CVD; the epidemiological evidence for the risks from depression is especially strong (Rutledge & Gould, 2020), showing a relationship over time and over countries. Even after controlling for other risk factors such as smoking and cholesterol, anxiety (Shen et al., 2008) and depression (Goldston & Baillie, 2008; Whang et al., 2009) predict the development of CVD. The risks of depression and anxiety apply not only to the development of CVD but also to its progression, as depression in the year following a heart attack predicts subsequent risk of cardiovascular mortality (Bekke-Hansen et al., 2012). However, the evidence is stronger for these two negative emotions in the development of CVD (Suls & Bunde, 2005). Indeed, evidence for the beginning of artery damage appeared in a study of depressed adolescents (Tomfohr et al., 2008), which is consistent with the long-term damage that accompanies CVD. More evidence about the harm of negative emotions has come from the study of hostility and anger.

Hostility and Anger Researchers have also found that some types of hostility and anger are risk factors for CVD. Much of this research grew out of work on the Type A behavior pattern, originally proposed by **cardiologists** Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman (1974; Rosenman et al., 1975), physicians who specialized in heart disease. Friedman and Rosenman may have gotten their inspiration for studying the Type A behavior pattern from a rather unusual source—an upholsterer. On numerous occasions, Friedman and Rosenman paid an upholsterer to repair the fabric on the seats in their waiting room. One day, the upholsterer commented that only the cardiology patients wore out the seats so quickly, with a pattern that suggested they

were habitually sitting on the edges of their seats. Years later, Meyer Friedman reported that this was the first time he remembered anybody making a connection between people's behavior patterns and their risk for CVD (Sapolsky, 1997).

Friedman and Rosenman described people with the Type A behavior pattern as hostile, competitive, concerned with numbers and the acquisition of objects, and possessed of an exaggerated sense of time urgency. During the early years of its history, the Type A behavior pattern demonstrated promise as a predictor of heart disease, but later researchers were unable to affirm a consistent link between the global Type A behavior pattern and incidence of heart disease. This situation led investigators to consider the possibility that some component of the pattern—rather than the entire pattern—might be a predictor.

Hostility appeared to be the component of Type A behavior that was risky. In 1989, Redford Williams suggested that cynical hostility is especially harmful to cardiovascular health. He contended that people who mistrust others, think the worst of humanity, and interact with others with cynical hostility are harming themselves and their hearts. Furthermore, he suggested that people who use *anger* as a response to interpersonal problems have an elevated risk for heart disease.

A body of research provided some confirmation for the relationship between hostility and CVD. Hostility early in life showed some predictive ability in one longitudinal study (Iribarren et al., 2000). Higher levels of hostility also predicted greater incidence of hypertension at a 15-year follow-up (Yan et al., 2003). A review of over 20 longitudinal studies confirmed hostility as a significant predictor of subsequent CVD (Chida & Steptoe, 2009). The cardiovascular health of men in particular relates to both hostility and another related emotion: anger.

Anger and hostility may seem the same, but they have important differences. Anger is an unpleasant *emotion* accompanied by physiological arousal, whereas hostility is a negative *attitude* toward others (Suls & Bunde, 2005). The *experience* of anger is probably unavoidable, but the manner in which a person deals with anger may be a factor in the development of CVD. People may express their anger, including yelling back when someone yells at them, raising their voice when arguing, and throwing temper tantrums. Alternatively, people may suppress their anger, holding in their feelings. Some evidence suggests that either strategy may pose problems.

Anger and Cardiovascular Reactivity One way that the expression of anger might relate to coronary heart disease is through **cardiovascular reactivity (CVR)**, typically defined as increases in blood pressure and heart rate due to frustration, harassment, or any laboratory stress task.

In one study using such a procedure (Suarez et al., 2004), African American men showed a stronger blood pressure response than did European American men or women from either ethnic group. This result suggests that the higher prevalence of hypertension among African American men may relate to higher reactivity. Another reactivity study (Merritt et al., 2004) focused on educational level and anger-coping strategies among African American men and found that low educational level and a high-effort style of coping are associated with higher blood pressure reactivity. For African Americans, the experiences of racism constitute a source of anger, and one study (Clark, 2003) connected the perception of racism with blood pressure reactivity. This type of reactivity difference also appeared in a study comparing African American and European American women (Lepore et al., 2006). Thus, reactivity may relate to hypertension among African Americans.

Suppressed Anger If expressing anger can undermine cardiac health for some people, then would it be better to suppress anger? Results from many studies (Dembroski et al., 1985; Jorgensen & Kolodziej, 2007; MacDougall et al., 1985) suggest that suppressing anger may be more toxic than forcefully expressing anger. One version of suppressed emotion is rumination—repeated



Hostility and expressed anger are risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

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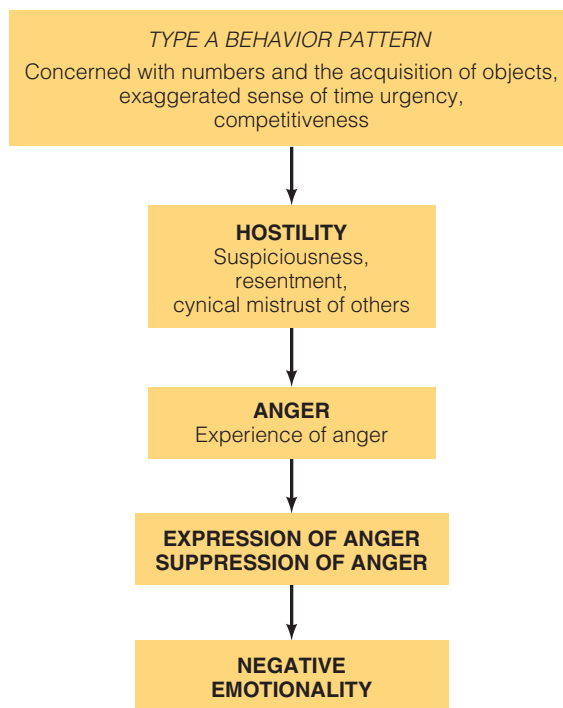
negative thoughts about an incident—which tends to increase negative feelings and depression (Hogan & Linden, 2004). Thus, people who suppress their anger but “stew” over their feelings may be using a coping style that puts them in danger. However, expressing anger (and other negative emotions) in a forceful way may act as triggers for those with CVD, precipitating a heart attack or stroke (Suls & Bunde, 2005).

So when it comes to expressing anger, are you “Damned if you do, damned if you don’t” (Dorr et al., 2007, p. 125)? How can people handle anger situations? Aron Siegman (1994) suggested that people learn to recognize their anger but to express it calmly and rationally, in a way that will be likely to resolve rather than escalate a conflict. Indeed, the manner in which a person expresses anger may affect cardiovascular health. People who discuss anger in a way that seeks to resolve a situation have better cardiovascular health, particular among men (Davidson & Mostofsky, 2010). In contrast, people who justify their anger by blaming other people have greater long-term incidence of cardiovascular health problems (Davidson & Mostofsky, 2010). Thus, it may not be just the anger that increases risk for cardiovascular problems but also the additional stress caused by alienating others with hostile expressions of anger.

Type D Personality. A more recent view of the relationship of psychological factors and CVD is the concept of Type D personality. The “D” stands for distress; the components of this construct are negative emotionality combined with social inhibition (Denollet, 2000). Early research on Type D personality established that a relationship exists between the personality type and CVD and the suggestion that the effects are mediated by increased cortisol release (Sher, 2005).

Other research related the two factors for the Type D personality to factors from the Five Factor Model of personality (De Fruyt & Denollet, 2002). The results showed a high, positive correlation between the concept of negative emotionality and scores on the Five Factor Model’s Neuroticism scale and a negative correlation between social inhibition and both Conscientiousness and Agreeableness. An attempt to compare the usefulness of the Type A behavior pattern with that of Type D personality, Lin and colleagues (2018) examined physiological factors related to plaque development in arteries. The results showed that both factors in Type D personality were predictive, whereas the Type A behavior pattern was not.

The Type D personality conceptualization may seem to share many similarities with factors proposed by the Type A behavior pattern. Both include factors



Note: **BOLDFACE** denotes components suggested by research to be the strongest link to heart disease.

FIGURE 9.9 Evolution from the Type A behavior pattern to Type D personality.

that represent negative emotionality and difficulties in getting along with people. These factors also relate to the well-established predictors of stress and anxiety. The body of research on Type D personality may provide a more useful way to conceptualize these psychological factors than the Type A concept. **Figure 9.9** shows the evolution of the Type A behavior pattern to hostility, to anger, to the expression or suppression of anger, to negative emotionality, and finally to Type D personality.

IN SUMMARY

Although the causes of CVD are not fully understood, an accumulating body of evidence points to certain risk factors. These factors include inherent risks such as advancing age, family history of heart disease, gender, and ethnic background. Other risk factors include physiological conditions such as hypertension, problems in glucose metabolism, and high serum cholesterol levels. Other than age, hypertension is the best predictor of CAD, and a higher

blood pressure equals higher risk for heart disease. Total cholesterol level is also related to coronary artery disease, but the *ratio* of total cholesterol to high-density lipoprotein is a more critical risk factor.

Behaviors such as smoking and unwise eating also relate to heart disease. Cigarette smoking is associated with increased risk for heart disease worldwide. Stopping smoking reduces risks, but deciding to never start smoking is the best choice for maintaining cardiovascular health. Eating foods high in saturated fat may lead to obesity, which is a risk for CVD. Also, consuming low levels of fruits and vegetables adds to one's risk of heart disease.

Psychosocial risk factors related to coronary artery disease include low educational and income levels; low levels of social support and marital satisfaction; and high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. The anger and hostility components descended from the Type A behavior pattern are independent risk factors for heart disease. Both the violent expression and the suppression of anger may contribute to CHD. In addition, Type D (distressed) personality, consisting of negative emotionality and social withdrawal, seems to increase CVD risk.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Present an argument for how the identification of inherent risks for CVD can be beneficial to those with such risks.
2. Construct a profile of your risks for CVD, including the inherent, physiological, and behavioral factors.
3. Draw a diagram of the risk factors in the psychosocial category, listing all the factors, then draw lines to indicate interconnections among the categories. Provide a rationale for your connections.

9-4 Reducing Cardiovascular Risks

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 9-10** Explain how optimistic bias may prevent people from adhering to behaviors that decrease the risk for CVD
- 9-11** Discuss the factors that are necessary to manage to decrease the risk of CVD

9-12 Evaluate the similarities and differences in decreasing CVD risks before and after an event such as stroke or heart attack

Psychology's main contribution to cardiovascular health involves changing unhealthy behaviors before these behaviors lead to disease. In addition, psychologists may help people who have been diagnosed with heart disease; that is, they often help cardiac rehabilitation patients adhere to an exercise program, a medical regimen, a healthy diet, and smoking cessation.

Before Diagnosis: Preventing First Heart Attacks

What can people do to lower their risks for CVD? Ideally, people should prevent CVD by modifying risk factors before the disease process causes damage. A longitudinal study by Jerry Stamler and his colleagues (1999) indicated that prevention is possible—maintaining a low level of risk factors protects against CVD. This study examined young adult and middle-aged men and women in five large cohorts to see if a low-risk profile would reduce both CVD and other causes of mortality. After dividing the participants into risk groups and screening for as long as 57 years, results indicated that low-risk participants had lower rates of death not only from CHD and stroke but also from all causes. Thus, young and middle-aged men and women who can modify CVD risks to attain low-risk profiles will also lower their risk for all-cause mortality and can expect to live 6 to 10 years longer.

The factors that Stamler et al. (1999) examined were smoking, cholesterol levels, and blood pressure—three major risk factors for CVD. However, the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle may begin as early as childhood (Beilin & Huang, 2008), when dietary and physical activity patterns are often established, and definitely continues during adolescence, when most smokers begin their habit. Keeping risk factors low can pay substantial dividends in later years (Matthews et al., 2007). After people acquire high risks from behavioral factors such as smoking and unwise eating, managing those risks becomes more difficult. As psychologists are frequently concerned with changing behavior, many of their techniques can be helpful in modifying behaviors that place people at risk for developing CVD.

The most serious behavioral risk factor is cigarette smoking, a behavior that also contributes to many other disorders, especially lung cancer. For this reason, all of Chapter 12 is devoted to a discussion of tobacco use.

Although hypertension and serum cholesterol are not behaviors, both can change indirectly through changes in behavior, making these factors candidates for intervention (Joseph et al., 2017).

Before people cooperate with programs to change their behavior, they must perceive that these behaviors place them in jeopardy, which is often a problem for people who have no symptoms of CVD. These individuals may recognize established risk factors in calculating their personal risk, but they often display what Neil Weinstein (1984) called an **optimistic bias** in assessing their risk. That is, people—particularly young adults—believe they will not develop the problems that other people with similar risk profiles will develop. These thoughts place such individuals in the precontemplation or contemplation stage, according to the transtheoretical model, when they are not ready to make changes (Prochaska et al., 1992, 1994; see Chapter 4 for more on this model). Moving people toward this acceptance is an important step. The technique of motivational interviewing challenges people's beliefs with the goal of moving people toward making positive change; this technique was part of a successful program to increase fruit and vegetable consumption (Resnicow et al., 2001). Thus, moving people to the point of making changes in their health habits is a major challenge for health psychologists involved in cardiovascular health.

Reducing Hypertension Lowering high blood pressure into the normal range is often a difficult task because a number of physiological mechanisms act to keep blood pressure at a set point (Osborn, 2005). Despite the difficulty, interventions aim to increase people's adherence to behaviors that can, over time, reduce hypertension. One such behavior is the regular use of antihypertensive drugs that require a physician's prescription. The goal is typically to lower blood pressure to 120/80 mmHg or lower (American College of Cardiology, 2017). Because hypertension presents no unpleasant symptoms and the medications may cause side effects, many patients are reluctant to follow this regimen. (The factors affecting adherence to this and other medical regimens are discussed in Chapter 4.)

Several behaviors relate to both the development and the treatment of hypertension, and these behaviors are also targets of interventions. Obesity correlates with hypertension, and many obese people who lose weight lower their blood pressure into the normal range (Moore et al., 2005). Thus, losing weight is part of blood pressure control. (We discuss strategies for losing weight in Chapter 15.) Individuals with hypertension also typically receive recommendations to restrict sodium

intake and make dietary changes (Bhatt et al., 2007). The Dietary Approach to Stop Hypertension (DASH) originated as a plan to control hypertension; it includes a diet high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products as well as other lifestyle changes. **Table 9.3** shows a daily menu that adheres to the DASH diet, with both regular and low-sodium options. Not only is the DASH diet effective in lowering individuals' blood pressure but also decreases the risk for stroke and CHD in women (Fung et al., 2008). A regular physical activity program is also effective in controlling hypertension, especially in people who have been sedentary (Murphy et al., 2007). (We discuss exercise in Chapter 15.) Other techniques for reducing blood pressure include stress management, meditation, and relaxation training (we discuss these interventions in Chapters 5 and 8). Thus, a program to control hypertension may have both drug and behavioral components.

Lowering Serum Cholesterol Interventions aimed at lowering cholesterol levels can include drugs, dietary changes, increased physical activity, or a combination of these components. Eating a diet low in saturated fat and high in fruits and vegetables and maintaining a program of regular physical activity are good strategies for preventing high cholesterol levels, and dietary and exercise interventions are key components in managing high cholesterol levels (USDHHS, 2003). However, once a person develops high cholesterol levels, a prudent diet and physical activity are not likely to lower cholesterol to an acceptable level. Thus, many people with high cholesterol cannot achieve substantially lower cholesterol levels through diet and exercise.

Physicians may prescribe cholesterol-lowering drugs such as the statin drugs to patients with high total cholesterol levels or high LDL levels (Yebo et al., 2019). These drugs act by blocking an enzyme that the liver needs to manufacture cholesterol. They are especially effective in lowering LDL cholesterol and can reduce risks and improve survival of people at risk for CVD (Cholesterol Treatment Trialists' [CTT] Collaboration, 2010). Despite their effectiveness, these drugs require a prescription, cost money, and have side effects.

The recommendations for cholesterol lowering are complex. First, relying on drugs to lower cholesterol without behavioral changes is not a good strategy. Behavioral interventions can help both men and women adhere to a regular exercise program as well as a low-fat diet. Such adherence can lower LDL and improve the ratio of total cholesterol to HDL. If lifestyle changes do not lower cholesterol, then drugs are an option, but

TABLE 9.3 Sample Daily Menu from the DASH Plan, with Regular and Low-Sodium Options

2,300 mg Menu	Sodium	Substitution to Reduce Sodium to 1,500 mg	Sodium
Breakfast			
3/4 cup bran flakes cereal	220	3/4 cup shredded wheat cereal	1
1 medium banana	1		
1 cup low-fat milk	107		
1 slice whole wheat bread	149		
1 tsp margarine	26	1 tsp unsalted margarine	0
1 cup orange juice	5		
Lunch			
3/4 cup chicken salad	179	Remove salt from recipe	120
2 slices whole wheat bread	299		
1 tbsp Dijon mustard	373	1 tbsp regular mustard	175
Salad			
1/2 cup cucumber slices	1		
1/2 cup tomato wedges	5		
1 tbsp sunflower seeds	0		
1 tsp Italian dressing, low calorie	43		
1/2 cup fruit cocktail, juice pack	5		
Dinner			
3 oz roast beef	35		
2 tbsp fat-free gravy	165		
1 cup green beans	12		
1 small baked potato	14		
1 tbsp sour cream, fat free	21		
1 tbsp reduced-fat cheddar cheese	67	1 tbsp reduced-fat cheddar cheese, low sodium	1
1 small whole wheat roll	148		
1 tsp margarine	26	1 tsp unsalted margarine	0
1 small apple	1		
1 cup low-fat milk	107		
Snacks			
1/3 cup unsalted almonds	0		
1/4 cup raisins	4		
1/2 cup fruit yogurt, fat free, no added sugar	86		

Source: Adapted from *Your guide to lowering your blood pressure with DASH* (NIH Publication No. 06-4082), 2006, by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS). Washington, DC: Author.

not before, especially for people with low levels of risk. Second, the ratio of total cholesterol to HDL is more important than total cholesterol. Statins tend to lower LDL rather than raise HDL, but these drugs lower cholesterol and incidence of heart attacks and stroke, making them a good choice for people with very high or resistant cholesterol levels (Cheng et al., 2004). Third, people with multiple risks for CVD, such as hypertension, diabetes, or smoking, should consider the task of lowering cholesterol as more urgent than those with fewer risks (Yebo et al, 2019).

Modifying Psychosocial Risk Factors Earlier, we discussed research that links psychosocial factors such as stress, anxiety, depression, and anger with CVD. The evidence for these risks is sufficiently compelling for some authorities to call for the development of *behavioral cardiology* (Allan et al., 2018; Rozanski et al., 2005), urging cardiologists to screen for psychological risks and to recommend psychological interventions to decrease anxiety and depression and to manage stress and anger. Consistent with this concept, research on people who received angioplasty (Helgeson, 2003) indicated that those who had a more positive outlook about themselves and their future were less likely to experience a recurrence of CVD.

Anger and negative emotions are also a target of intervention, and clinical health psychologists recommend a variety of strategies for coping with hostility, anger, and depression. To reduce the toxic element in anger, perpetually angry people can learn to become aware of cues from others that typically provoke angry responses. They can also remove themselves from provocative situations before they become angry, or they can do something else. In interpersonal encounters, angry people can use self-talk as a reminder that the situation will not last forever. Humor is another potentially effective means of coping with anger (Godfrey, 2004), but it may present its own risks. Sarcastic or hostile humor can incite additional anger, but silliness or mock exaggerations often defuse potentially volatile situations. Relaxation techniques can also be effective strategies for dealing with anger. These techniques can include progressive relaxation, deep-breathing exercises, tension reduction training, relaxing to the slow repetition of the word *relax*, and relaxation imagery, in which the person imagines a peaceful scene. Finally, angry people can lower their blood pressure by constructively discussing their feelings with other people (Davidson et al., 2000).

Discussing feelings with a therapist may also benefit people who are depressed, but physicians may not always recognize this problem. Thus, screening for

depression among people at risk for CVD is an urgent need (Allan et al., 2018; Goldston & Baillie, 2008). Depression is also common among people who experience a heart attack or other CVD event. These individuals may be more willing to undertake changes to avoid another heart attack or stroke.

After Diagnosis: Rehabilitating Cardiac Patients

After people experience a heart attack, angina, or other symptoms of CVD, they sometimes receive a referral to a cardiac rehabilitation program to change their lifestyle and lower risk for a subsequent (and possibly even more serious) event. In addition to survival, the goals of cardiac rehabilitation programs are to help patients deal with psychological reactions to their diagnosis, to return to normal activities as soon as possible, and to change to a healthier lifestyle.

Patients recovering from heart disease, as well as their spouses, often experience a variety of psychological reactions that include depression, anxiety, anger, fear, guilt, and interpersonal conflict. For cardiac patients, the most common psychological reaction to a myocardial infarction is *depression*, which decreases adherence to medication and lifestyle changes (Dhar & Barton, 2016; Kronish et al., 2006) and increases the risk of death to 3.5 times that for nondepressed cardiac patients (Guck et al., 2001).

Treating depression among cardiac patients is an important, but difficult problem. Two large-scale interventions sought to treat depression among cardiac patients, using antidepressant medications (Glassman et al., 2009) or cognitive behavioral therapy (Berkman et al., 2003). Although these trials have some success in treating depression, the antidepressant intervention did not improve survival. The cognitive behavioral intervention improved survival among European American men, but not among ethnic minority men or among women (Schneiderman et al., 2004).

Another common psychological reaction related to depression is *anxiety*. A follow-up study of cardiac rehabilitation patients (Michie et al., 2005) showed that those who completed the rehabilitation program continued to make progress not only in lowering their physiological risks but also in lowering their levels of anxiety and depression and increasing their feelings of control. One common source of anxiety among heart patients and their spouses is the resumption of sexual activity. The probable source of this anxiety is concern about the elevation of heart rate during sex, especially during orgasm. However, sexual activity poses little threat to



BECOMING HEALTHIER

1. Although you cannot change inherent risk factors, knowing that you are at high risk can motivate you to change some modifiable risk factors.

Action Plan: Explore your family risks to understand how extensive they are, and then make a plan to compensate through modifying the risks you can change.

2. Hypertension is the best predictor of cardiovascular risk, which makes it a valuable piece of personal information.

Action Plan: Have your blood pressure checked. If it is in the normal range, you can keep it that way by exercising, controlling your weight, and moderating alcohol consumption. Also try some of the relaxation techniques discussed in Chapter 8. If your blood pressure is above

the normal range (even a little), consult a physician.

3. Knowing your cholesterol level is another important piece of information related to CVD risk.

Action Plan: Have your cholesterol level checked; be sure to ask for a complete profile, one that includes measures of both HDL and LDL as well as the ratio of total cholesterol to HDL.

4. Smoking is also an important risk factor for CVD.

Action Plan: If you are a smoker but have failed at prior attempts to quit, keep trying. Many smokers make multiple attempts before quitting successfully.

5. A heart-healthy diet can decrease CVD risk, but many students find it difficult to manage wise dietary choices.

Action Plan: Keep a food diary for at least one week. Note the amount of saturated fat as well as fruits and vegetables you eat and the approximate number of calories consumed per day. A heart-healthy diet is low in saturated fat and includes five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

6. If you are persistently angry and react to anger-arousing events with loud, sudden explosions of anger or if you “stew” over such events, this behavior pattern may increase your CVD risk.

Action Plan: List some alternative strategies to your current angry reactions by expressing your frustrations in a soft, quiet voice. Work toward developing a set of coping strategies that will help you avoid so many negative emotional experiences.

cardiac patients. Also, male CAD patients who take Viagra do not have an elevated risk of subsequent heart problems, but this drug may interact in dangerous ways with drugs for hypertension that such patients may be taking (Jackson, 2004).

Cardiac rehabilitation programs usually include components to help patients stop smoking, eat a low-fat/low-cholesterol diet, control their weight, moderate their alcohol intake, learn to manage stress and hostility, and adhere to a prescribed medication regimen. Also, cardiac patients frequently participate in a graduated or structured exercise program in which they gradually increase their level of physical activity. In other words, the same lifestyle recommendations for avoiding a first cardiovascular event also apply to survivors of myocardial infarction, coronary artery bypass graft surgery, and stroke. In addition, cardiac patients are often encouraged to join a social support group, participate in health education programs, and allow support from their primary caregiver. Some research

(Clark et al., 2005) indicated that cardiac patients rated such social support and being with others who shared the same problem as the most valuable aspects of the program.

Dean Ornish and his colleagues (1998) devised a comprehensive, intensive cardiac rehabilitation program with diet, stress management, smoking cessation, and physical activity components in an effort to *reverse* heart patients' coronary artery damage. Although similar to the interventions that attempt to alter risk factors, this program was more comprehensive and imposed more stringent modifications, especially with regard to diet. The Ornish program recommends that cardiac patients reduce their consumption of fat to only 10% of their total caloric intake, which necessitates a careful vegetarian diet with no added fats from oils, eggs, butter, or nuts. An evaluation of the program included a control group that received a typical cardiac rehabilitation program along with the experimental group of participants on the Ornish program.

Early research on the benefits of the program (Ornish et al., 1990) indicated that, after one year on the program, 82% of patients in the treatment group showed a regression of plaques in the coronary arteries. After five years, this program produced less artery blockage and fewer coronary events. A later study (Aldana et al., 2007) failed to confirm the reversal of arterial plaque but showed that patients on the Ornish program decreased their risk factors to a greater extent than those in a standard cardiac rehabilitation program and decreased their symptoms of angina substantially. Other research confirmed that dietary change can reverse arterial plaque (Shai et al., 2010). The main disadvantage of intensive cardiac rehabilitation programs, such as the Ornish plan, is the difficulty of following such a stringent diet and such an intensive program (Dansinger et al., 2005). Despite their demonstrated effectiveness, such programs remain underutilized (Freeman et al., 2019).

Adherence is a major problem with cardiac rehabilitation programs in general. Less than half of cardiac patients complete their rehabilitation regimen (Taylor et al., 2011). One factor that may influence adherence involves the physician, rather than the patient: Many cardiologists fail to endorse rehabilitation programs, which affects their patients' willingness to participate. Many patients also cite difficulties in finding time for and traveling to a clinic for rehabilitation. These factors may affect women more strongly than men, thus explaining the lower rate of completion among female heart patients (Oosenbrug et al., 2016). However, the same factors that predict the development of CVD also predict failure to adhere to rehabilitation: depression, smoking, being overweight, and having a high cardiovascular risk profile (Taylor et al., 2011). Thus, the patients who are most in need of intervention may be least likely to adhere. When used as intended, many different rehabilitation programs are effective, including the standard exercise-based programs (Dibben et al., 2018), brief interventions (Fernandez et al., 2007), and at-home rehabilitation programs (Dalal et al., 2010).

A meta-analysis of studies on the effectiveness of two components of cardiac rehabilitation programs (Dusseldrop et al., 1999) found that heart disease patients

who followed a health education and stress management program had a 34% reduction in cardiac mortality and a 29% reduction in recurrence of a heart attack. Exercise-based cardiac rehabilitation programs are also effective in reducing cardiac mortality and heart attack recurrence (Lawler et al., 2011). Exercise may present some risks for cardiac patients, but the benefits far outweigh the risks. For example, a graded exercise program can enhance patients' self-efficacy for increasing levels of activity (Cheng & Boey, 2002) as well as increasing self-esteem and physical mobility (Ng & Tam, 2000). After a diagnosis of heart problems, exercise programs have three main goals (Thompson, 2001). First, exercise can maintain or improve functional capacity; second, it can enhance a person's quality of life; and third, it can help prevent recurrent heart attacks. Thus, cardiac rehabilitation programs are an effective but underused strategy.

IN SUMMARY

Health psychologists contribute to reducing risks for a first cardiovascular incident as well as to rehabilitating people who have already been diagnosed with CVD. Many of the risks for CVD relate to behaviors, such as smoking, diet, physical activity, and management of negative emotions. Combinations of lifestyle change and drugs are effective in lowering hypertension and cholesterol level, two important risks for CVD. In addition, health psychologists can help people modify negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, and anger, all of which are risks for CVD and often occur in patients after heart attacks. Health psychologists also strive to keep cardiac patients in rehabilitation and boost their levels of physical activity.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Describe the changes that you should make now to decrease the risks of cardiovascular disease when you are 30 years older.
2. Construct a diet, medication, and exercise plan suitable for a person who is recovering from a heart attack.

Questions

This chapter has addressed four basic questions:

1. What are the structures, functions, and disorders of the cardiovascular system?

The cardiovascular system includes the heart and the blood vessels (veins, venules, arteries, arterioles,

and capillaries). The heart pumps blood throughout the body, delivering oxygen and removing waste from body cells. Cardiovascular system disorders include (1) coronary artery disease, which occurs when the arteries that supply blood to the heart become clogged with plaque and restrict the blood supply to the heart muscle; (2) myocardial infarction

(heart attack), which is caused by blockage of coronary arteries; (3) angina pectoris, which is a nonfatal disorder with symptoms of chest pain and difficulty in breathing; (4) stroke, which occurs when the oxygen supply to the brain is disrupted; and (5) hypertension (high blood pressure), which is a silent disorder but a good predictor of both heart attack and stroke. Heart disease and stroke account for almost 30% of deaths in the United States.

2. What are the risk factors for cardiovascular disease?

Beginning with the Framingham study, researchers identified a number of cardiovascular risk factors. These factors include (1) inherent risk, (2) physiological risks, (3) behavioral and lifestyle risks, and (4) psychosocial risks. Inherent risk factors, such as advancing age, family history, gender, and ethnicity, are not modifiable, but people with inherent risk can alter their other risks to lower their chances of developing heart disease.

The two primary physiological risk factors are hypertension and high cholesterol; diet can play a role in controlling each of these. Behavioral factors in CVD include smoking, a diet high in saturated fat and low in fiber and antioxidant vitamins, and low physical activity level. Psychosocial risks include low educational and income levels; lack of social support; and persistently high levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. In addition, characteristics

such as hostility, violent expressions of anger, suppression of anger, and a set of personality factors referred to as Type D elevate risk.

3. How does lifestyle relate to cardiovascular health?

Lifestyle factors such as smoking, dietary choices, and a sedentary lifestyle all predict cardiovascular health. During the past three decades, deaths from heart disease have steadily decreased in the United States; perhaps as much as 50% of that drop is a result of changes in behavior and lifestyle. During this same time period, millions of people have quit smoking, altered their diet to control weight and cholesterol, and begun an exercise program.

4. What behaviors are effective in lowering cardiovascular risks?

Both before and after a diagnosis of heart disease, people can use a variety of approaches to reduce their risks for CVD. Drugs, sodium restriction, and weight loss all can control hypertension. Also, drugs, diet, and exercise can lower cholesterol levels. Lowering the ratio of total cholesterol to HDL is probably a better idea, but the statin type of cholesterol-lowering drugs tends to lower LDL, which can also be beneficial. Also, people can learn to manage stress more effectively, enter therapy to improve depression, and learn to manage anger and negative emotionality.

Suggested Readings

- Dafoe, W. A., & Colella, T. J. (2016). Loneliness, marriage and cardiovascular health. *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*, 23(12), 1242–1244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2047487316643441>. This brief article examines the benefits of marriage as a protective factor for developing heart disease as well as the relationship to overall health.
- Levy, D., & Brink, S. (2005). *A change of heart: How the Framingham Heart Study helped unravel the mysteries of cardiovascular disease*. New York, NY: Knopf. This report on the Framingham Heart Study includes not only the fascinating history of this project but also the major findings from the study and tips for maintaining heart health.

- Miller, G. E., & Blackwell, E. (2006). Turning up the heat: Inflammation as a mechanism linking chronic stress, depression, and heart disease. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 15, 269–272. This brief article reviews the concept of inflammation and its risks while attempting to build a model that integrates stress and depression into an explanation for the development of heart disease.
- Yusuf, S., Hawken, S., Ôunpuu, S., Dans, T., Avezum, A., Lanas, F. et al. INTERHEART Study Investigators (2004). Effect of potentially modifiable risk factors associated with myocardial infarction in 52 countries (the INTERHEART Study): Case-control study. *Lancet*, 364, 937–952. The INTERHEART Study identified nine factors that predicted most of the variance in heart attack deaths in countries throughout the world. This report details the study and presents the relative contributions of each of the nine.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 10-1** Evaluate the difference in danger for benign and malignant growths
- 10-2** Describe the characteristics of the four main types of malignant growths
- 10-3** Explain the two factors that have contributed to the decline in cancer deaths in the United States
- 10-4** Describe how an increase in the incidence of a cancer may not equal an increase in the death rate of the cancer
- 10-5** Describe what type of research would confirm that ethnicity should be classified as an inherent risk factor as well as what kind of research would show that ethnicity should be classified as an environment or social risk factor
- 10-6** Refute the statement: Genetic factors are the cause of 60% of cancers
- 10-7** Name three environmental risk factors and describe how people encounter these risks
- 10-8** Rank the behavioral factors for cancer according to the severity of the risk each poses, along with a brief description of your reasoning for the ranking
- 10-9** Evaluate the role of optimistic bias as a factor in the behavioral risk factors for cancer
- 10-10** Evaluate the role of psychosocial factors in the development of cancer
- 10-11** Describe the advantages and drawbacks to the most common treatments for cancer
- 10-12** Describe three factors that are associated with a good adjustment to a diagnosis of cancer and three factors that are associated with a poor diagnosis
- 10-13** Discuss the importance of social support for cancer patients and survivors and the best sources for social support

CHAPTER 10

Behavioral Factors in Cancer

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Steve Jobs

What Is Cancer?

The Changing Rates of Cancer Deaths

- Cancers with Decreasing Death Rates
- Cancers with Increasing Incidence and Mortality Rates

Cancer Risk Factors Beyond Personal Control

- Inherent Risk Factors for Cancer
- Environmental Risk Factors for Cancer

Behavioral Risk Factors for Cancer

- Smoking
- Diet
- Alcohol
- Sedentary Lifestyle
- Ultraviolet Light Exposure
- Sexual Behavior
- Psychosocial Risk Factors in Cancer

Living with Cancer

- Problems with Medical Treatments for Cancer
- Adjusting to a Diagnosis of Cancer
- Social Support for Cancer Patients
- Psychological Interventions for Cancer Patients

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on five basic questions:

1. What is cancer?
2. Are cancer death rates increasing or decreasing?
3. What are the inherent and environmental risk factors for cancer?
4. What are the behavioral risk factors for cancer?
5. How can cancer patients be helped in coping with their disease?

Steve Jobs's battle with cancer lasted a total of eight years, far longer than the initial prognosis. Steve's wealth afforded him the best medical treatments, which may have extended his life. However, he later came to regret his decision to delay the surgery that his physician had recommended. Why did Steve initially reject treatment for his cancer? Few people who receive a cancer diagnosis choose alternative treatments over conventional medicine, but those who do are likely to reduce their survival (Johnson et al., 2018). What issues did Steve likely cope with in his battle against cancer? Was Steve's "fighting spirit" something that helped him live for so long after his diagnosis? We will explore these questions in this chapter, but first, we need to define what cancer is.

10-1 What is Cancer?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 10-1 Evaluate the difference in danger for benign and malignant growths
- 10-2 Describe the characteristics of the four main types of malignant growths

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by the presence of new cells that grow and spread beyond control. During the 19th century, the great physiologist Johannes Muller discovered that tumors, like other tissues, consisted of cells and were not formless collections of material. However, their growth seemed unrestrained by the mechanisms that control other body cells.

The finding that tumors consisted of cells did not shed light on what caused their growth. During the 19th century, the leading theory of cancer was that a parasite or infectious agent caused the disorder, but researchers could find no such



Check Your Health Risks

Regarding Cancer

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Someone in my immediate family (a parent, sibling, aunt, uncle, or grandparent) developed cancer before age 50. | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. My diet is low in fat. | <input type="checkbox"/> 15. I have at least two alcoholic drinks every day. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. I am African American. | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. My diet includes lots of smoked, salt-cured, or pickled foods. | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. I exercise on a regular basis. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. I have never had a job where I was exposed to radiation or hazardous chemicals. | <input type="checkbox"/> 9. I rarely eat fruits or vegetables. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. I have never been a cigarette smoker. | <input type="checkbox"/> 10. My diet is high in fiber. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. I am a former smoker who quit during the past five years. | <input type="checkbox"/> 11. I have light-colored skin, but I like to get at least one nice tan every year. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. I have used tobacco products other than cigarettes (such as e-cigarette/vaping device, chewing tobacco, a pipe, or cigars). | <input type="checkbox"/> 12. I have had more than 15 sexual partners during my life. | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 13. I have never had unprotected sex with a partner who was at high risk for HIV infection. | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> 14. I am a woman over age 30 who has not given birth to a child. | |

Each of these topics either is a known risk factor for some type of cancer or has the potential to protect against it. Items 3, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16 describe situations that may offer some protection against cancer. If you checked none or only a few of these items and many the remaining items, your risk for some type of cancer is higher than people who checked different items. Behaviors related to smoking and diet (items 4 to 10) place you at a greater risk than other behaviors, such as item 15 (alcohol).

agent. Because of this failure, the mutation theory arose, holding that cancer originates because of a change in the cell—a mutation. The cell continues to grow and reproduce in its mutated form, and the result is a tumor.

Cancer is not unique to humans; all animals get cancer, as do plants. Indeed, any cell that can divide can transform into a cancer cell. In addition to the diverse *causes* of cancer, many different *types* exist. However, different cancers share certain characteristics, the most common of which is the presence of **neoplastic** tissue cells, which have nearly unlimited growth that robs the host of nutrients but yields no compensatory beneficial effects. All true cancers share this characteristic of neoplastic growth.

Neoplastic cells may be **benign** or **malignant**, although the distinction is not always easy to determine. Both types consist of altered cells that reproduce true to their altered type. However, benign growths tend to remain localized, whereas malignant tumors tend to spread and establish secondary colonies. The tendency for benign tumors to remain localized usually makes them less threatening than malignant tumors, but not all benign tumors are harmless. Malignant tumors are much more dangerous because they invade and destroy surrounding tissue and may also move, or **metastasize**, through blood or lymph and thus spread to other sites in the body.

The most dangerous characteristic of tumor cells is their autonomy—that is, their ability to grow without regard to the needs of other body cells and without being subject to the restraints of growth that govern other cells. This unrestrained tumor growth makes cancer capable of overwhelming its host, damaging other organs or physiological processes, or using nutrients essential for body functions. The tumor then becomes a parasite on its host, gaining priority over other body cells.

Malignant growths fall into four main groups: carcinomas, sarcomas, leukemias, and lymphomas. **Carcinomas** are cancers of the epithelial tissue, cells that line the outer and inner surfaces of the body, such as skin, stomach lining, and mucous membranes. **Sarcomas** are cancers that arise from cells in connective tissue, such as bone, muscles, and cartilage. **Leukemias** are cancers that originate in the blood or blood-forming cells, such as stem cells in the bone marrow. These three types of cancers—carcinomas, sarcomas, and leukemias—account for more than 95% of malignancies. The fourth type of cancer is **lymphoma**, a cancer of the lymphatic system, which is one of the rarer types of cancer.

Although some people may have a genetic predisposition to cancer, people almost never inherit the disease. Behavior and lifestyle are primary contributors to cancer, making it possible for the rates of cancer to change over relatively short periods.



Real-World Profile of STEVE JOBS



Featureflash Photo Agency/Shutterstock.com

In 2003, Steve Jobs and his company Apple were revolutionizing the technology world. The iPod, unveiled a year and a half earlier, changed how the world listened to music. Jobs and his team started developing the iPhone and the iPad, two products that would similarly revolutionize the mobile phone and computer industries. Steve Jobs—a charismatic, perfectionistic, and demanding workaholic—had already appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine four times. Apple's worth steadily mounted.

In this same year, during a CT scan to look for kidney stones, Steve's doctors noticed something unexpected on his pancreas. The diagnosis soon became islet cell neuroendocrine pancreatic cancer, a rare form of one of the deadliest of cancers. With a low survival rate for conventional treatments, people diagnosed with pancreatic cancer often try alternative therapies. Steve initially refused his doctors' suggestions for surgery, saying, "I really didn't want them to open up my body" (Isaacson, 2011, "Cancer," paragraph 6).

Jobs first tried a variety of alternative treatments, including a vegan diet, acupuncture, herbal remedies, and even a psychic. After delaying standard medical treatment for nine months, Steve finally relented to surgery. By then, the cancer had already spread to other parts of his body. Steve then sought the most advanced treatments for his condition, which included radiation therapy and a liver transplant. The treatments and transplant took a physical toll with Steve becoming increasingly gaunt.

In August 2011, he resigned from Apple for health reasons. Two months later, Steve Jobs died of respiratory failure due to complications arising from advanced pancreatic cancer.

10-2 The Changing Rates of Cancer Deaths

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 10-3** Explain the two factors that have contributed to the decline in cancer deaths in the United States
- 10-4** Describe how an increase in the incidence of a cancer may not equal an increase in the death rate of the cancer

For the first time on record, the death rate from cancer in the United States declined during the 1990s. This trend ended a century-long increase in cancer deaths that peaked in 1991, when cancer mortality was more than three times higher than in 1900 (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2020). **Figure 10.1** shows an increase in total cancer death rates in the United States from 1900 to the 1990s and then a gradual decline. The decrease

is significant—more than 25%. However, the decline in cancer deaths is occurring more slowly than the decline in cardiovascular disease that began in the 1960s. Indeed, cancer may become the leading cause of death in the United States if the two trends continue (Harding et al., 2018).

Why are cancer death rates dropping? At least two explanations are possible. First, the decline might be due to improved treatment that prolongs the life of cancer patients. We can test the validity of this explanation by examining the difference between cancer incidence and cancer deaths. If incidence remained the same, or even increased, while deaths declined, then better treatment would account for the drop in cancer deaths. However, the evidence does not support this hypothesis, as both cancer incidence and cancer deaths declined during the 1990s (Siegel et al., 2012). Some of that decrease is attributable to the lower incidence of certain cancers, such as lung cancer in men, and some of it is due to improved early detection and treatment, such as the decline in deaths from prostate and breast cancer. Thus, better treatment regimens play a role in the decrease in

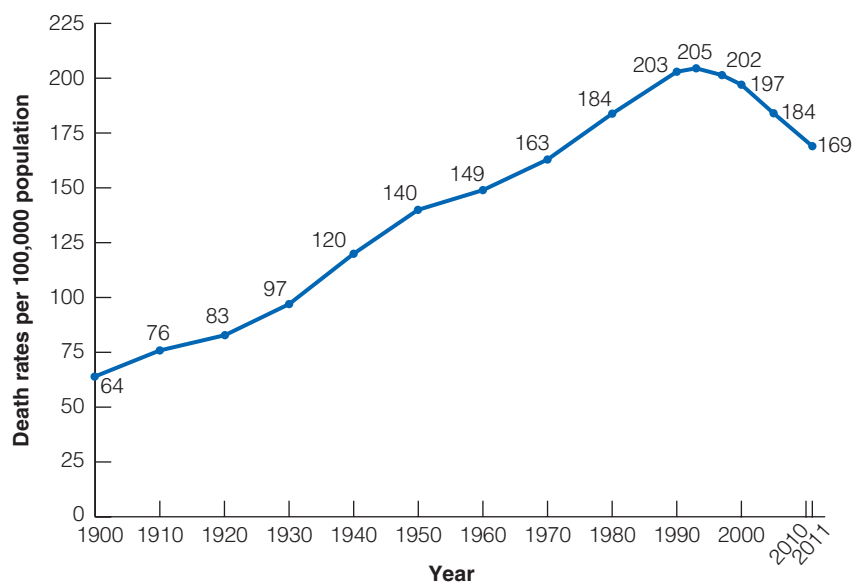


FIGURE 10.1 Death rates from cancer per 100,000 population, United States, 1900 to 2017.

Source: Data from *Historical statistics of the United States: Colonial times to 1970, Part 1* (p. 68) by U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; *Statistical abstract of the United States, 2008* (127th edition), by U.S. Census Bureau, (2007), Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; A. Jemal et al., 2008. Cancer statistics by A. Jemal et al., 2008. CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians, 58, 71–96; Cancer statistics by Siegel, R. L., Miller, K. D., & Jemal, A., 2015. CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians, 65(1), 5–29; Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer, Part I: National Cancer Statistics by J. Henley et al., 2020, *Cancer*, 126(10), Table 3.

cancer deaths, but people are developing cancer less often than they did in the previous century. In the United States, for example, people are smoking much less and eating a healthier diet than they did 50 years ago. Because lifestyle factors such as smoking, diet, and physical inactivity account for about two-thirds of all cancer deaths in the United States (ACS, 2020), improvements in these areas should result in lower rates of cancer.

Cancers with Decreasing Death Rates

Lung, breast, prostate, and colon/rectum cancers account for about half of all cancer deaths in the United States, and mortality rates for each of these sites have declined.

Lung cancer accounts for about 13% of all cancer cases, but 22% of all cancer deaths—figures that reveal the deadliness of lung cancer. Between 1990 and 2017, mortality due to lung cancer in the United States declined for both men and women (ACS, 2020; see Figures 10.2 and 10.3). **Figure 10.2** shows that lung cancer mortality for women rose dramatically from 1965 to 1995 and remained level until 2008 but then began to decline.

In Europe, this pattern is somewhat similar, with lung cancer mortality for men declining at a more rapid rate than for women. Worldwide, lung cancer is the second deadliest cancer for women (Torre et al., 2017). Because cigarette smoking is the primary cause of lung cancer deaths, the rise and fall of deaths tracks with smoking rates.

Other than prostate cancer, *breast cancer* has the highest incidence (but not death rate) of any cancer in the United States, accounting for about 30% of cancer cases among women (ACS, 2020). Men also develop breast cancer, but women account for 99% of all new cases. The incidence of female breast cancer increased from 1980 to 2001 but then began to decline. One factor that may be involved in this decline is the decrease in the number of postmenopausal women using hormone replacement therapy, some types of which were linked to breast cancer (Siegel et al., 2012). The decline in the breast cancer death rate is due mainly to improvements in early detection and treatment.

Prostate cancer has the highest incidence of cancer among men in the United States, but again, it does not have the highest mortality rate—about twice as many

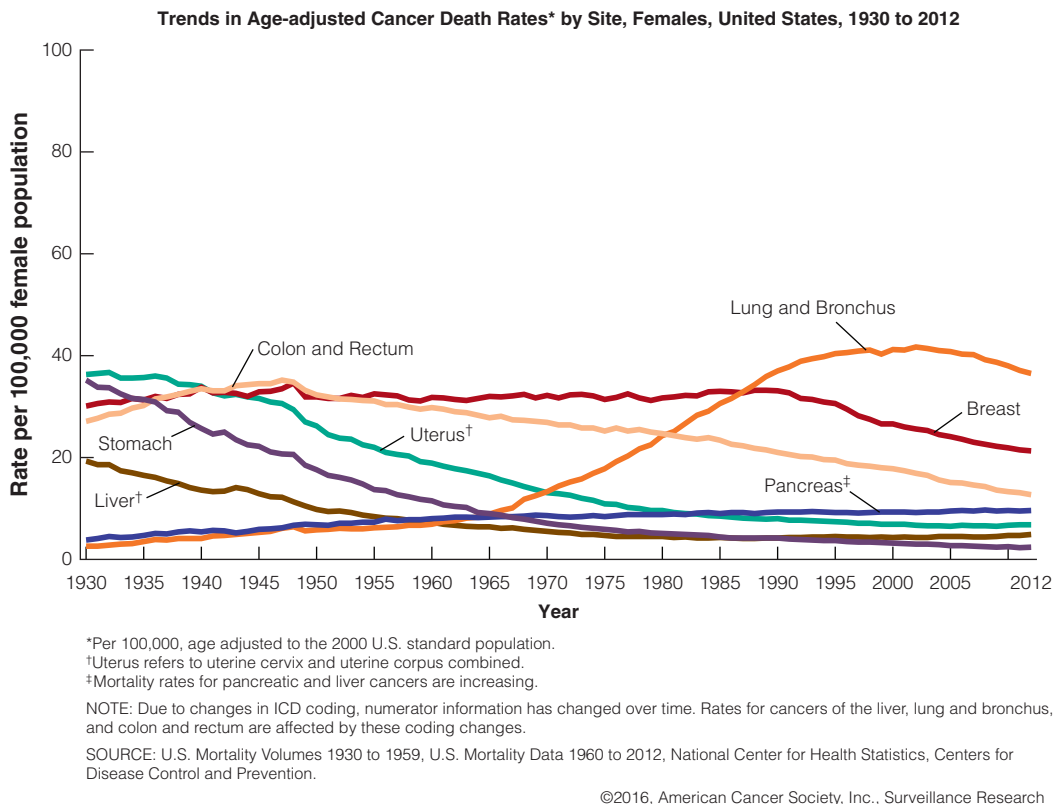


FIGURE 10.2 Cancer death rates for selected sites, women, United States, 1930 to 2017.

Source: The American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts and Figures 2020*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, Inc.

men die each year from lung cancer as from prostate cancer. New cases of prostate cancer increased sharply during the 1980s when prostate-specific antigen (PSA) screening was first introduced. From 2000 to 2017, however, the number of new cases—about 21% of all cancer cases in men—declined significantly (ACS, 2020).

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States and other high-income countries, exceeded only by lung cancer. However, in the United States, both the incidence and the mortality rates of colorectal cancer are decreasing. Incidence and mortality rates vary by ethnic background, with African Americans more likely to receive a diagnosis of and die from colorectal cancer than either Hispanic Americans or European Americans (Henley et al., 2020). Although the incidence of colorectal cancer increased slightly until about 1985, the mortality rate has been declining since about 1945 (see **Figures 10.2** and **10.3**).

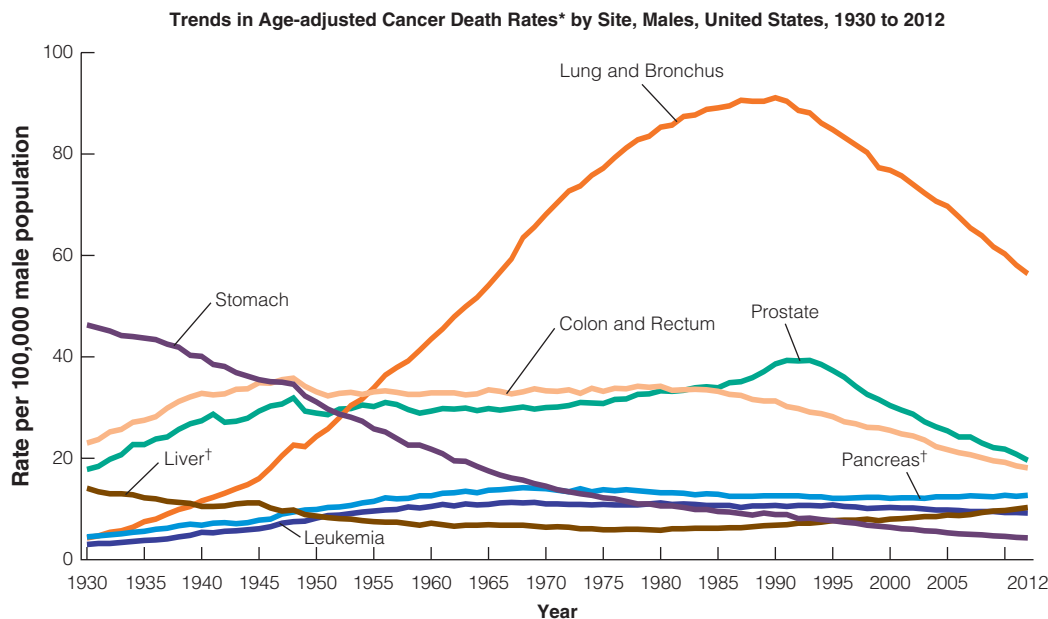
Death rates from *stomach cancer* have dropped from being the leading cause of cancer deaths for both women and men to having a very low mortality rate.

As we discuss later, modern refrigeration and fewer salt-cured foods probably account for most of the decrease in stomach cancer.

Cancers with Increasing Incidence and Mortality Rates

In general, incidence rates for the four leading cancers—lung, breast, prostate, and colorectal—are declining, with more of a decrease for men than for women. However, not all cancer rates are decreasing. Several cancers have increased in recent years (Henley et al., 2020).

Incidence of liver cancer has increased and, like lung cancer, is quite lethal, with a death rate (3.6%) nearly twice as high as its incidence rate (1.7%). This cancer is increasing among both women and men, but men have a higher rate (Henley et al. 2020). The patterns of incidence and mortality vary with ethnicity, and incidence and death rates tend to be higher for minorities compared with European Americans.



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FIGURE 10.3 Cancer death rates for selected sites, men, United States, 1930 to 2017.

Source: The American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts and Figures 2020*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, Inc.

Melanoma, a potentially fatal form of skin cancer, is increasing among both men and women, but the death rate for that cancer is falling, attributable to improved treatment. The incidence of pancreatic cancer—the cancer that killed Steve Jobs—has also increased, and it, too, is one of the most lethal cancers. Some cancers are increasing among men but falling among women, such as thyroid cancer. Thus, the pattern of cancer diagnoses and deaths presents a complex picture.

IN SUMMARY

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by the presence of neoplastic cells that grow and spread without control. These new cells may form benign tumors, which tend to remain localized, or malignant tumors, which may metastasize and spread to other organs.

After more than a century of rising mortality rates, cancer deaths are declining in the United States. This decrease is most evident among the four cancers that cause most cancer deaths—lung,

breast, prostate, and colorectal cancers. Since 1992, incidence and death rates among men for these four cancers have declined at a slow but steady pace; decreasing cancer rates for women began later but are also in progress. The leading cause of cancer deaths for both women and men continues to be lung cancer. The incidences of breast cancer among women and prostate cancer among men are much higher than the incidence of lung cancer, but lung cancer kills far more people in the United States than does either breast cancer or prostate cancer.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Describe two examples of cancers that are (1) rising or falling for both men and women and (2) two cancers that are increasing or decreasing differently according to some demographic factors such as ethnicity or gender.

10-3 Cancer Risk Factors Beyond Personal Control

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 10-5** Describe what type of research would confirm that ethnicity should be classified as an inherent risk factor as well as what kind of research would show that ethnicity should be classified as an environment or social risk factor
- 10-6** Refute the statement: Genetic factors are the cause of 60% of cancers
- 10-7** Name three environmental risk factors and describe how people encounter these risks

Most risk factors for cancer result from personal behavior, especially smoking. However, some factors are largely beyond personal control; these factors include both inherent and environmental risks.

Inherent Risk Factors for Cancer

Inherent risks for cancer include genetics and family history, ethnic background, and age. Many people attribute their risk of cancer to these factors, especially genetics. A survey (“Practical Nurse,” 2008) indicated that 9 out of 10 people overestimated the genetic risk, and 60% of people named genetics as the primary risk for cancer. Does their perception agree with the research? How important are genetic and other inherent risk factors such as ethnicity and age?

Ethnic Background Compared with European Americans, African Americans fare more poorly; they have a greater incidence of most cancers, and mortality is higher in almost every category (Siegel et al., 2016). However, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans have lower rates than either African Americans or European Americans for all cancer sites combined, as well as for the four most common cancers. These discrepancies are most likely due to behavioral and psychosocial factors rather than to biology. For example, although Asian Americans generally have lower total cancer death rates than European Americans, they have a much higher mortality rate for

stomach and liver cancers. Both cancers are caused by behavioral and environmental factors. Stomach cancer is strongly influenced by diet and chronic infection by the *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria, whereas liver cancer is strongly influenced by infection with the hepatitis C virus (Siegel et al., 2016). Thus, behavioral factors may account for these ethnic differences.

Minority status plays a greater role in survival of cancer than it does in cancer incidence. For cancer sites with a low mortality level, the discrepancy between incidence and mortality widens with ethnic background. With breast cancer, for example, European American women have a higher incidence rate than African American women, but African American women are more likely to die from this cancer (Siegel et al., 2016).

How does minority status contribute to cancer outcomes—that is, length of survival and quality of life? Although Hispanic Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans develop many cancers at a lower rate than European Americans, their diagnoses tend to come at a later stage of their cancers (Siegel et al., 2016). This difference affects survival; later diagnoses tend to lead to more advanced disease, more difficulty in treatment, and lower survival rates. An examination of survival differences between African Americans and European Americans (Du et al., 2007) showed that controlling for socioeconomic factors erased the difference in survival rates, which suggests that social and economic factors create the disparity.

Advancing Age The strongest risk factor for cancer—and many other diseases—is advancing age. The older people become, the greater their chances of developing and dying of cancer. **Figure 10.4** shows a steep increase in cancer mortality by age for both men and women, but especially for men.

Cancer is also the second leading cause of death among children between ages 1 and 14 (exceeded only by unintentional injuries; Siegel et al., 2016). Cancers that are most common among children include leukemia, cancers of the brain and nervous system, and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. Testicular cancer is also an exception to the general rule concerning age; the highest risk for this cancer occurs during young adulthood. These cancers are likely to have some genetic component.

Family History and Genetics The first evidence of a genetic component for cancer came from the Nurses’ Health Study (Colditz et al., 1993), which showed that

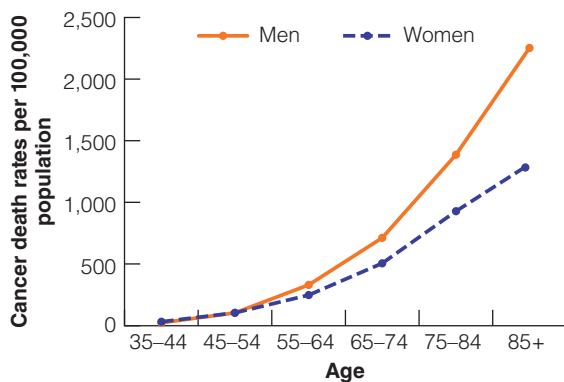


FIGURE 10.4 Probability (%) of developing invasive cancer at various ages, 2014 to 2016

Source: Adapted from American Cancer Society “Cancer Facts and Figures,” 2020. Atlanta, Table 6.

women whose mothers received a breast cancer diagnosis before age 40 were more than twice as likely to develop breast cancer. A sister with breast cancer also doubled the risk; having both a sister and a mother with breast cancer increased a woman’s risk about 2.5 times. This research has progressed to the identification of specific genes involved in breast cancer, first the *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* genes, and subsequent investigations have revealed many other gene mutations that are risk factors for breast cancer (Lee et al., 2019). Women who have a mutated form of *BRCA1* are as many as seven times more likely to develop breast cancer as women with the healthy form of this gene. However, the risk from mutations in *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* or any of the other implicated genes are not unique to breast cancer risk; these mutations are risks for a variety of other cancers that include risks for men as well as women. These genes do not create a certainty of developing cancer, but people with the mutation have an increased risk, especially for developing cancers at younger ages.

The form of breast cancer involving *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* is responsible for no more than 10% of breast cancer. Even with the recent research focusing on genes and genetic variations that may be cancer risks, many genes for breast cancer remain unidentified (Lee et al., 2019). Indeed, an analysis of inherent and environmental risks (Maas et al., 2016) showed that most of the risk for developing breast cancer comes from sources other than genetics.

Across all cancers, only 5% to 10% percent are due to inherited genetic mutations (NCI, 2016), with breast, ovarian, prostate, and colorectal cancers being

the types of cancer most likely to arise from inherited genetic mutations. The search for single genes that underlie the development of cancer has been largely unsuccessful (Lee et al., 2019). Instead, researchers have identified configurations of genes that seem to lead to vulnerabilities for specific cancers. Furthermore, some cancers may arise from a complex interaction between genetic vulnerability and behavioral risk factors (Maas et al., 2016). For example, some evidence suggests that women with the *BRCA2* mutation may be at a greater risk of alcohol-induced breast cancer compared with women without the *BRCA2* mutation (Dennis et al., 2011). Therefore, despite the widespread publicity about genetic causes of cancer, genes play a fairly minor role in the development of cancer; environmental and behavioral factors are much more important.

Environmental Risk Factors for Cancer

Environmental risk factors for cancer include exposure to risks such as radiation and asbestos and to pollutants such as pesticides, herbicides, motor exhaust, and other chemicals (Miligi et al., 2006). In addition, arsenic, benzene, chromium, nickel, vinyl chloride, and various petroleum products are possible contributors to a number of cancers (Boffetta, 2004; Siemiatycki et al., 2004).

Longtime exposure to asbestos can increase risk for lung cancer, depending on the type of asbestos and the frequency and duration of exposure. A study in Sweden (Gustavsson et al., 2000) examined the possible carcinogenic effects of asbestos as well as diesel exhaust, motor exhaust, metals, welding fumes, and other environmental conditions that some workers encounter on the job. The results showed that workers with exposure to environmental carcinogens had about a 9% additional chance of developing lung cancer compared with people without exposure to these conditions. A 25-year longitudinal study of asbestos workers in China (Yano et al., 2001) reported that male asbestos workers, compared with other workers, had 6.6 times the likelihood of developing lung cancer and 4.3 times the likelihood of developing any cancer.

Exposure to radiation is also a risk (Lewandowska et al., 2019). Individuals who are exposed to more X-rays or radiation as a treatment for cancer have increased risks for future cancers. Nuclear power plant workers exposed to high levels of radiation showed elevated risks for leukemia and cancers of the rectum,

colon, testicles, and lung (Sont et al., 2001). Living in a community with a nuclear power plant, however, seems to present no elevated risk; the observed rate of cancer in such communities is similar to that of other communities (Boice et al., 2003). The radioactive gas radon also presents increased risks for lung cancer, both for miners who are exposed and for people who live in homes with high levels of this type of radiation (Krewski et al., 2006).

Some infections and chronic inflammation also present elevated risks for cancers. Infection with the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* is widespread throughout the world and increases the risk for gastric ulcers as well as gastric cancer (McColl et al., 2007). Hepatitis infection is a risk for liver cancer. Chronic inflammation is a factor in the development of bladder cancer (Michaud, 2007) and possibly in prostate cancer (De Marzo et al., 2007). Chronic infections disturb cell regulation processes, which may be the underlying reason for the relationship between inflammation and the increased risk for cancer (Lewandowska et al., 2019). However, infection and inflammation may be more attributable to behavior than to environmental exposure.

IN SUMMARY

Inherent risks for cancer include ethnic background, advancing age, and family history and genetics. African Americans have higher cancer incidence and death rates than European Americans, but people from other ethnic backgrounds have a lower incidence. These differences are due not to biology but to differences in socioeconomic status, which is related both to the incidence of cancer and to five-year survival with the disease.

The strongest risk factor for cancer—as well as many other diseases—is advancing age. As a person gets older, the risk for cancer increases. Furthermore, men have an even greater increase than women.

Although cancers do not develop because of a single gene, family history and genetic predisposition play a role in the development of a growing list of cancers, especially prostate and breast cancers. A woman who has a mother or sister with breast cancer has a two to threefold higher chance of developing the disease, and mutations of the *BRCA1* and *BRCA2* genes place people at elevated risk for breast and pancreatic cancers. However, genetic

factors play a relatively small role in the development of cancer.

Environmental risks also contribute to cancer incidence and deaths. Pollutants, pesticides, radiation exposure, and infections such as the human papillomavirus increase the risk for various cancers. Workers exposed to asbestos and radiation are at increased risk, as are people living in homes with high levels of radon.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Explain why knowing about uncontrollable cancer risks can allow a person to lower the risk of developing cancer.

10-4 Behavioral Risk Factors for Cancer

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 10-8** Rank the behavioral factors for cancer according to the severity of the risk each poses, along with a brief description of your reasoning for the ranking
- 10-9** Evaluate the role of optimistic bias as a factor in the behavioral risk factors for cancer
- 10-10** Evaluate the role of psychosocial factors in the development of cancer

Cancer results from an interaction of genetic, environmental, and behavioral conditions, most of which are still not clearly understood. As with cardiovascular diseases, however, several behavioral cancer risk factors are clear. Recall that risk factors are not necessarily *causes* of a disease, but they do predict the likelihood that a person will develop or die from that disease. Most risk factors for cancer relate to personal behaviors and lifestyles, especially smoking and poor diet. Other known behavioral risks include alcohol, physical inactivity, exposure to ultraviolet light, sexual behavior, and psychosocial factors.

Smoking

“If nobody smoked, one of every three cancer deaths in the United States would not happen” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2010d, p. 7).

The vast majority of smoking-related cancer deaths are from lung cancer, but smoking is also implicated in deaths from many other cancers, including cancers of the larynx, pharynx, esophagus, oral cavity, bladder, liver, uterus, stomach, colon, and pancreas (American Cancer

Society, 2020). There is not a consistent relationship between smoking and breast cancer, but women who smoke throughout adolescence may increase their risk for this type of cancer (Ha et al., 2007). The risk of cigarette smoking also applies to other countries around the world; smoking is the single largest risk for cancer mortality worldwide (WHO, 2019b). Thus, it is a misconception that smoking causes only lung cancer. **Figure 10.5** shows 15 different types of cancer associated with tobacco use.

Smoking can cause cancer almost anywhere in your body.

Here are some of the cancers that researchers know smoking causes.

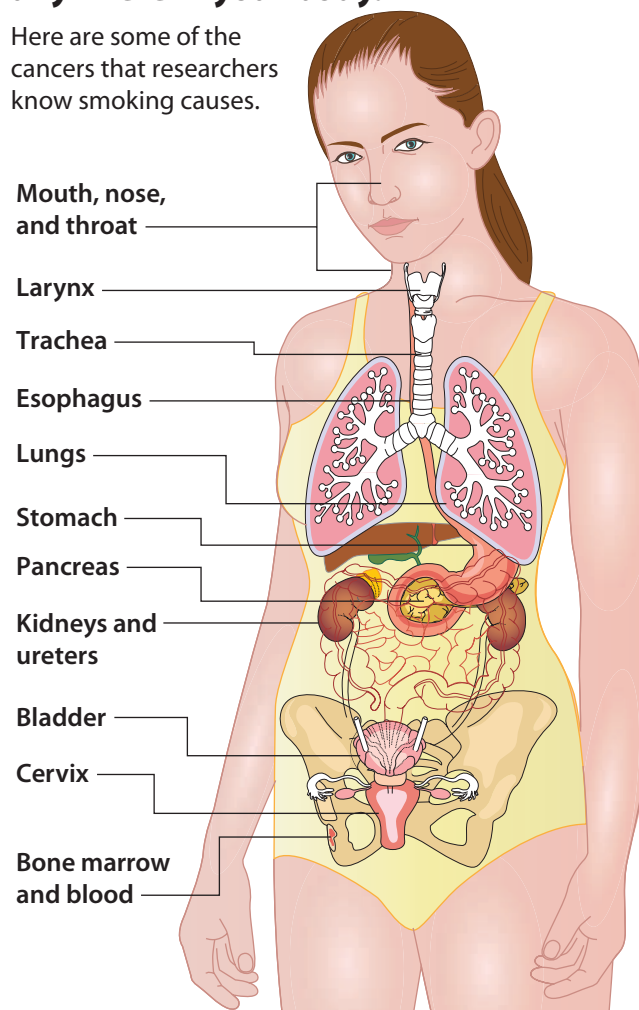


FIGURE 10.5 The many types of cancer associated with tobacco use.

Source: Adapted from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *A Report of the Surgeon General: How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: What It Means to You*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office of Smoking and Health, 2010.

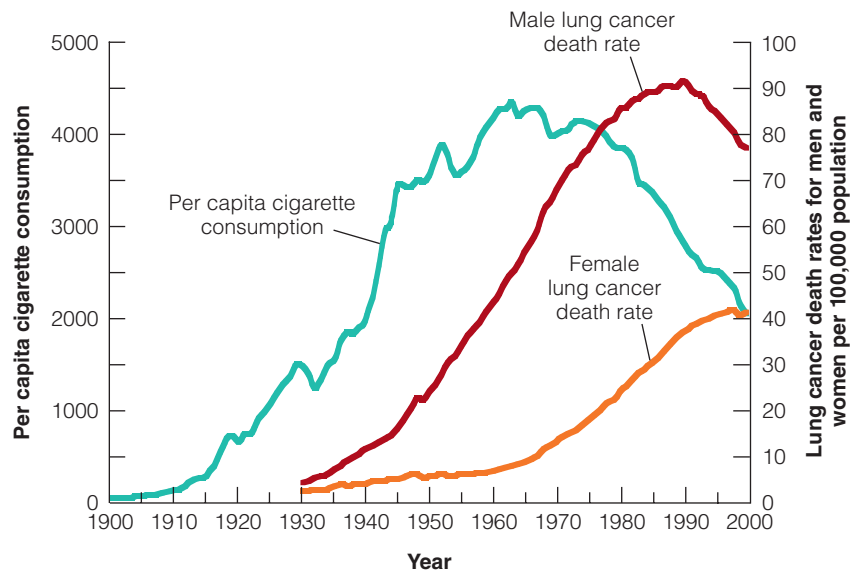


FIGURE 10.6 The parallel paths of cigarette consumption and lung cancer deaths for men and women, United States, 1900 to 2000.

Source: Data from *Health United States, 2011* (Table 32), by National Center for Health Statistics, 2012, Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Government Printing Office.

What Is the Risk? Sufficient evidence exists for epidemiologists to conclude a causal relationship exists between smoking and lung cancer. Chapter 2 includes a review of that evidence and explains how epidemiologists can infer causation from nonexperimental studies. The strong relationship between smoking and lung cancer becomes apparent when observing the way lung cancer rates track smoking rates. About 25 to 40 years after smoking rates began to increase for men, lung cancer rates started a steep rise; about 25 to 40 years after cigarette consumption decreased for men, lung cancer death rates for men began to drop (see [Figure 10.6](#)). Women’s smoking has declined more gradually and so have their lung cancer mortality rates.

The strong relationship holds when analyzed by income. Low-income men smoke more than high-income men, and they have a higher lung cancer mortality rate; low-income women smoke a little less than high-income women and they have a slightly lower rate of lung cancer mortality (Weir et al., 2003). The dose–response relationship between cigarette smoking and lung cancer and the close tracking of smoking rates and lung cancer rates provide compelling evidence for a causal relationship between smoking and the development of lung cancer.

How high is the risk for lung cancer among cigarette smokers? The U.S. Department of Health and

Human Services (USDHHS, 2014) estimated that the relative risk of lung cancer for smokers is 24.9, meaning that those who smoke are *nearly 25 times more likely to get lung cancer* than those who have never smoked. The risk that cigarette smokers have of dying of lung cancer is the strongest link between any behavior and a major cause of death.

Cigarette smoking is not the only form of tobacco use that increases the risk for cancer. Smoking cigars or using smokeless tobacco—also known as “chew,” “spit,” or “snuff” tobacco—also increases the likelihood of death from several forms of cancer, including laryngeal, oral, esophageal, and pancreatic cancers (ACS, 2020). As we will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 12, there is no safe way to use tobacco products.

In addition to tobacco use, factors such as polluted air, socioeconomic level, occupation, ethnic background, and building material in one’s house all link to lung cancer. Each of these has an additive or possibly a **synergistic effect** with smoking, so studies of different populations may yield quite different risk factor rates, depending on the combination of risks that cigarette smokers have in addition to their risk as a smoker. For example, Chinese men who smoke have an elevated risk for lung cancer that increases with exposure to smoke from burning coal, which is a common practice for household heating and cooking in China (Danaei et al., 2005).

What Is the Perceived Risk? Despite their heightened vulnerability to cancer, many smokers do not perceive that their behavior puts them at risk. They show what Neil Weinstein (1984) referred to as an *optimistic bias* concerning their chances of dying from cigarette-related causes. Both smokers and nonsmokers acknowledge that smoking is a health risk. Despite knowledge to the contrary, both high school smokers (Tomar & Hatsukami, 2007) and adult smokers (Peretti-Watel et al., 2007) believe that, unlike other smokers, they will somehow escape the deadly effects of cigarette smoking. The adult smokers expressed their belief that smoking is dangerous at some level—but not at the level of their consumption. Sometimes, even, people who succumb to diseases associated with smoking deny the role that tobacco likely played. Rock guitarist Eddie van Halen—a smoker for over four decades—believed that his tongue and esophageal cancer were due to putting metal guitar picks in his mouth rather than smoking cigarettes.

This tendency to deny personal risk may be stronger in countries where smoking is more prevalent and attitudes toward smoking are more lenient. Denmark is such a country, and Danish people are more likely to deny personal risk than Americans (Helweg-Larsen & Nielsen, 2009). This denial of risk is all the more surprising when considering that, compared with the United States, Denmark has *higher* rates of mortality due to tobacco-related diseases such as lung cancer, oral cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Thus, optimistic biases are common and may be tied to the cultural prevalence and acceptability of smoking.

Diet

Another risk factor for cancer is an unhealthy diet and overweight. The American Cancer Society (2020) estimated that between 12% and 20% of all cancer deaths in the United States are a result of dietary choices and sedentary lifestyle. Poor dietary practices are associated with a wide variety of cancers, but good choices decrease the risks.

Foods That May Cause Cancer Some foods are suspected of being **carcinogenic**—that is, of causing cancer, almost always because of contaminants or additives (Abnet, 2007). “Natural” foods lack preservatives, which can result in high levels of bacteria and fungi. A long list of bacteria and fungi presents risks for stomach cancer. The

sharp decline in this form of cancer is due in part to increased refrigeration during the past 75 years and to lower consumption of salt-cured foods, smoked foods, and foods stored at room temperature (see Figures 10.2 and 10.3). Aflatoxin is a fungus that grows on improperly stored grains and peanuts; exposure to this toxin increases the risk for liver cancer (ACS, 2020). However, food additives used as preservatives can also be carcinogenic, and toxic chemicals produced by various industries can work their way into the environment and into foods, as in the case of dioxin. Thus, foods that lack preservatives and those with preservatives may both present some risk.

In Chapter 9, we saw that dietary fat is an established risk for cardiovascular disease; a number of studies have shown that dietary fat is also a risk for cancer, especially colon cancer (Murtaugh, 2004). However, a high-fat diet is a stronger risk for cardiovascular disease than it is for cancer. Much of the research on dietary fat and cancer centers on breast cancer and suggests that dietary fat is a modest but reliable risk factor for this form of cancer (Freedman et al., 2008). A high-fat diet also contributes to high cholesterol levels, which appears as a risk factor for testicular cancer in men—raising the risk by 4.5 times (Dobson, 2005).

Consumption of preserved meat (such as ham, bacon, and hot dogs) raises the risk for colorectal cancer (Lewandowska et al., 2019). A possible risk associated with red meat is the method of cooking; charred, smoked, or overcooked red meats may be a factor in increasing this type of risk (Alaejos et al., 2008), and salt-cured or heavily salted meats also raise risks for stomach cancer (WCRF/AICR, 2007).

A stronger risk for colorectal cancer comes not from any specific dietary component but from overweight and obesity (ACS, 2020; Lewandowska et al., 2019). Obesity accounts for 5% to 11% of all cancer-related deaths (ACS, 2020). Obesity is strongly related to cancer of the esophagus, breast (mostly in postmenopausal women), endometrium, and kidney. Abdominal fat is a risk not only for cardiovascular disease but also for cancer of the pancreas, endometrium, and kidney. Although eating several specific types of food increases the risk for cancers, a diet that leads to overweight or obesity is more of a risk.

Foods That May Protect Against Cancer If specific foods and overall diet can increase the risk for cancer, might some dietary measures offer protection? One team of researchers has calculated that if people around

the world were to eat an adequate amount of fruits and vegetables, as many as 2.6 million deaths per year would be eliminated (Lock et al., 2005). The same researchers estimated that this fruit- and vegetable-rich diet might reduce the incidence of stomach cancer by 19%, esophageal cancer by 20%, lung cancer by 12%, and colorectal cancer by 2%. Public knowledge of the benefits of a healthy diet contributed to an improvement in diet among U.S. residents from 1999 to 2012, and these improvements prevented over 1 million premature deaths (Wang et al., 2015). However, despite these improvements, the overall diet of the typical American—and many others worldwide—remains poor.

Despite these known benefits of a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, it remains unclear whether specific nutrients protect against the development or proliferation of cancer. This lack of clarity may be due to the research methods used to investigate dietary components. For example, population studies showed that people in countries with a high-fiber diet experienced lower rates of colorectal cancer than people in countries with a low-fiber diet. This result prompted research using the case-control method in which people who eat a high-fiber diet were compared with those who eat a low-fiber diet (see Chapter 2 for a description of this method). Such studies involve fewer people than population studies, so small effects of fiber in the diet may not be clear using this approach. Alternatively, other differences between the two groups may contribute to the effect of fiber in the diet, making a clear conclusion difficult. If case-control studies indicate that the nutrient has a positive effect, which they have for fiber and colorectal cancer (WCRF/AICR, 2007), researchers then perform experimental studies.

The randomized clinical trial is an experimental method that is the best method for detecting differences between groups. For dietary studies, however, this method has drawbacks (Boyd, 2007). Such studies are experimental, involving the manipulation of a factor—in this case a dietary component. Half the participants receive the component, and half do not, creating a clear comparison. However, the exposure is typically short-term; few clinical trials last longer than a few years, and most have limited follow-ups. Improving a diet for two years may not provide sufficient exposure to have an impact on the development of cancer, which develops over years. Or participants may need to ingest nutrients during childhood or adolescence for maximum benefit, but most studies include only adult participants.

In addition, randomized clinical trials usually isolate a nutrient and provide that nutrient through supplements, rather than through broad changes to the diet. Taking supplements often fails to produce the benefits of eating a diet high in the same nutrients. Thus, the benefits of specific nutrients may be complex, and randomized clinical trials may miss some of those important benefits.

These limitations have restricted researchers from coming to conclusions about the cancer-preventive benefits of many nutrients. An extensive review of the evidence (WCRF/AICR, 2007) was able to place several nutrients into the category of *probable* (but not *convincing*) evidence for benefits. **Beta-carotene** is one of the carotenoids, a form of vitamin A found abundantly in foods such as carrots and sweet potatoes. Eating a diet rich in carotenoids probably lowers the risk for cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx, and lungs; high beta-carotene intake has a similar benefit for the risk for cancer of the esophagus, as does a diet rich in vitamin C. People who eat foods high in folate, one of the B vitamins, probably decrease their chances of developing pancreatic cancer. Evidence for any protective power of these nutrients is weaker for other types of cancer.

Selenium is a trace element found in grain products and in meat from grain-fed animals. Initial evidence concerning selenium intake seemed to indicate that this nutrient was protective against colon and prostate cancers (Bardia et al., 2008). However, a meta-analysis (Vinceti et al., 2018) indicated no protective effects specifically for selenium; however, consumption of whole grains is protective against colon cancer (Theodoratou et al., 2017).

Thus, an evaluation of the extensive research suggests that some nutrients may have protective effects against some cancers, but the evidence of a protective effect is stronger concerning the overall diet and maintaining close to the ideal body weight. A healthy diet includes lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, fish and seafood, and low-fat dairy products; the amount of preserved and red meat, saturated fat, salt-cured foods, and foods made of highly processed ingredients is low. This description fits with the concept of a Mediterranean-type diet, emphasizing a plant-based diet with a variety of foods that people can adopt as part of a healthy lifestyle (Williams & Hord, 2005). Another element of the Mediterranean diet is alcohol—but in limited amounts.

Alcohol

Alcohol is not as strong a risk factor for cancer as either smoking or eating an imprudent diet. Nevertheless, alcohol does increase the risk for cancers of the mouth, esophagus, breast, and liver (Theodoratou et al., 2017). The liver has primary responsibility for detoxifying alcohol. Therefore, persistent and excessive drinking often leads to cirrhosis of the liver, a degenerative disease that curtails the organ's effectiveness. Cancer is more likely to occur in cirrhotic livers than in healthy ones (WCRF/AICR, 2007), but alcohol abusers are likely to die of a variety of other causes before they develop liver cancer.

Does drinking alcohol cause breast cancer? Current evaluations of the research indicate that the evidence is convincing (Theodoratou et al., 2017). The risk varies by exposure; women who consume three or more drinks per day have a moderate to strong risk for breast cancer, and women who consume as little as one to two drinks daily have some risk (Singletary & Gapstur, 2001). The risk is not equal in all countries. In the United States, about 2% of breast cancer cases can be attributed to alcohol, but in Italy, where alcohol intake is considerably higher, as many as 15% of breast cancer cases may be due to drinking. **Table 10.1** summarizes the risks and benefits of specific dietary choices and alcohol consumption.

Alcohol has a synergistic effect with smoking, so people who both smoke and drink heavily have a risk for certain cancers exceeding that of the two independent risk factors added together. People who both drink and smoke and who have a family history of esophageal,

stomach, or pharynx cancer have an increased risk for cancers of the digestive tract (Garavello et al., 2005). These data suggest that people who both drink heavily and smoke could substantially reduce their chances of developing cancer by giving up either smoking or drinking. Quitting both, of course, would reduce the risk still more.

Sedentary Lifestyle

A sedentary lifestyle increases the risk for some types of cancer, including cancers of the colon, endometrium, breast, lung, and pancreas (WCRF/AICR, 2007). Thus, physical activity can reduce risks for these cancers. A review of meta-analyses that included more than a million participants (McTiernan et al., 2019) concluded that there is strong evidence that physical activity lowers the risk for bladder, breast, colon, endometrial, esophageal, kidney, and digestive tract cancers. Some studies (Bernstein et al., 1994; Thune et al., 1997) suggest that women who begin a physical activity program when they are young and who continue to exercise four hours a week greatly reduce their risk for breast cancer. This age-sensitive effect may make the overall benefit of exercise difficult to determine for premenopausal women.

Another indirect benefit of physical activity for cancer risk is its relationship with body weight. Physical activity is important for maintaining a healthy body weight and a favorable level of body fat, both of which relate to risk for several cancers—that is, some forms of vigorous physical activity can lower cancer risk in several ways. The benefits (and potential risks) of physical activity are discussed in detail in Chapter 15. (See the Would You Believe . . . ? box to learn more about how physical activity, in addition to other cancer-prevention behaviors, reduces risk for many causes of death.)

Ultraviolet Light Exposure

Exposure to ultraviolet light, particularly from the sun, is a well-known cause of skin cancer, especially for light-skinned people (ACS, 2020; WCRF/AICR, 2007). Both cumulative exposure and occasional severe sunburn relate to subsequent risk of skin cancer. Since the mid-1970s, the incidence of skin cancer has risen in the United States. However, because this form of cancer has a low mortality rate, it has only slightly affected total cancer mortality statistics. Not all skin cancers, however, are harmless. One form, that is, malignant



Mixnik/Getty Images

Risks from smoking, drinking, and sun exposure can have a synergistic effect, multiplying the chances of developing cancer.

TABLE 10.1 Diet and Its Effects on Cancer

Type of Food	Findings of Increased Risk	Studies
“Natural” foods with no preservatives	Grains and peanuts may be contaminated with aflatoxin, which is carcinogenic. Spoiled food increases the risk for stomach cancer.	Abnet, 2007; American Cancer Society, 2020
Foods high in preservatives High-fat diet	Preservatives can be carcinogenic. Contributes to colon cancer.	Abnet, 2007 Murtaugh, 2004
	Modest risk for breast cancer. A high cholesterol level is a strong risk for testicular cancer.	Freedman et al., 2008 Dobson, 2005
Consumption of preserved meats and red meat	Increases the risk for colorectal cancer, especially if meat is smoked or charred.	WCRF/AICR*, 2007; Lewandowska et al., 2019; Alaejos et al., 2008; WCRF/AICR, 2007
Overweight and obesity	Strong link to colorectal, esophageal, breast, endometrial, and kidney cancers. Abdominal fat is a risk for cancers of the pancreas, endometrium, and kidney.	American Cancer Society, 2020
Alcohol	Raises the risk for cancers of the mouth, esophagus, breast, and liver, especially heavy drinking and drinking combined with smoking.	WCRF/AICR, 2007
Type of Food	Findings of Decreased Risk	Studies
Diet rich in fruits and vegetables	Could reduce worldwide rates of stomach cancer by 19%, esophageal cancer by 20%, lung cancer by 12%, and colorectal cancer by 2%.	Lock et al., 2005
Diet high in carotenoids, including beta-carotene	Probably lowers the risk for cancers of the mouth, larynx, pharynx, and lungs. Diets high in beta-carotene (but not supplements) lower the risk for cancer of the esophagus.	WCRF/AICR, 2007
Vitamin C	Probably lowers the risk for cancer of the esophagus.	WCRF/AICR, 2007
Diet high in folate	Probably lowers the risk for pancreatic cancer.	WCRF/AICR, 2007
Calcium	May protect against colon cancer.	WCRF/AICR, 2007
Summary	Overall diet and healthy weight are more strongly related to cancer than any one dietary component.	WCRF/AICR, 2007; Theodoratou et al., 2017

*World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research.

melanoma, is often deadly. Malignant melanoma is especially prevalent among light-skinned people exposed to the sun.

Although we associate skin cancer with a behavioral risk (voluntary exposure to the sun over a long period), there is also a strong genetic component associated with it (Pho et al., 2006). Light-skinned, fair-haired, blue-eyed individuals are more likely than dark-skinned

people to develop skin cancer, and much of the damage occurs with sun exposure during childhood (Dennis et al., 2008). During the past 50 years, the relationship between melanoma mortality rates and geographic latitude has gradually decreased; residence in areas of the United States with high ultraviolet radiation is no longer a risk factor for melanoma but remains a risk for other types of skin cancer (Qureshi et al.,

Would You BELIEVE...?

Cancer Prevention Prevents More Than Cancer

With one out of three cancer-related deaths attributable to smoking, your best way to avoid cancer is to avoid smoking. But how much do other cancer prevention behaviors matter, such as keeping a normal weight, maintaining a healthy diet, staying physically active, and drinking only in moderation (if at all)?

A study by McCullough and colleagues (2011) investigated this simple question. In the early 1990s, this research team from the American Cancer Society surveyed over 100,000 nonsmoking, older adults and asked them about their weight and height, diet, physical activity, and alcohol use. From these questions, the researchers computed a score

representing the extent of adherence to the existing American Cancer Society guidelines for cancer prevention. Nearly 15 years later, the research team consulted the National Death Registry to obtain answers to two additional, important questions: Was the person dead, and if so, what was the cause of death?

One finding may not be surprising. Respondents who were the most adherent to cancer prevention guidelines had a *30% lower risk of cancer-related death* than those who were the least adherent. Thus, adhering to all the other behaviors conferred a clear benefit in preventing cancer.

However, the cancer prevention behaviors prevented much more

than just cancer. The most adherent respondents had a *48% lower risk of death by cardiovascular disease* than the least adherent respondents. Taking all causes of death together, the most adherent respondents had a *42% lower risk of all-cause mortality*, compared with the least adherent respondents. Of all the behaviors this research team examined, maintaining a normal weight was the component most strongly tied to mortality.

Thus, by avoiding tobacco and following these other cancer prevention recommendations, you can reduce your odds of untimely death by nearly half.

2008). Fair-skinned people should avoid prolonged and frequent exposure to the sun by taking protective measures, including using sunscreen lotions and wearing protective clothing.

People should also avoid indoor tanning beds, which increase risk for melanoma. An international comprehensive review of research found a 75% increase in melanoma risk among people who used tanning beds in their teenage and young adult years (International Agency for Research on Cancer [IARC], 2007). Furthermore, a dose–response relationship exists: As people’s frequency of tanning bed use increases, so does risk for melanoma (Lazovich et al., 2010). However, despite this clear link between tanning bed use and skin cancer, a surprising number of malignant melanoma survivors still report using tanning beds (Puthumana et al., 2013). Thus, the optimistic biases seen in smokers exist in many tanning bed users as well.

Not all exposure to sunlight is detrimental to health. Vitamin D derives from sun exposure and contributes to lower rates of several types of cancer, including cancers of the breast, colon, prostate, ovary, lungs, and pancreas (Ingraham et al., 2008). However, the level of vitamin D necessary to protect against cancer seldom comes from diet alone. Therefore, low

levels of exposure to ultraviolet light can be a healthy means of supplying vitamin D. How much sun exposure is enough but not too much? In addition to the usual dietary supply of vitamin D, as little as 5 to 10 minutes of sun exposure of the arms and legs or the arms, hands, and face two or three times a week seems sufficient (Holick, 2004). Alternatively, dietary supplementation can provide vitamin D and its protective benefits (Ingraham et al., 2008).

Sexual Behavior

Some sexual behaviors also contribute to cancer deaths, especially cancers resulting from acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). Two common forms of AIDS-related cancers are Kaposi’s sarcoma and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. **Kaposi’s sarcoma** is a malignancy characterized by soft, dark-blue or purple nodules on the skin, often with large lesions. The lesions can be so small at first as to look like a rash but can grow to be large and disfiguring. Besides covering the skin, these lesions can spread to the lung, spleen, bladder, lymph nodes, mouth, and adrenal glands. Until the 1980s, this type of cancer was quite rare and was limited mostly to older men of Mediterranean background.

However, AIDS-related Kaposi's sarcoma occurs in every age group and in both men and women. As AIDS became more common during the 1980s, the incidence of Kaposi's sarcoma increased; it began to decrease in the 1990s as treatment for HIV became more effective.

In **non-Hodgkin's lymphoma**, rapidly growing tumors spread through the circulatory or lymphatic system. Like Kaposi's sarcoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma can occur in AIDS patients of all ages and both genders. However, most people with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma are *not* HIV-positive. The greatest risk for AIDS-related cancers continues to be unprotected sex with a HIV-positive partner.

Exposure to another sexually transmitted virus—the human papillomavirus, or HPV—increases risk for two types of cancer: cervical cancer and oral cancer. HPV is necessary for the development of cervical cancer (Banister et al., 2017), but not all infected people develop cancer. The rates of HPV infection are high, especially for sexually active young people (Datta et al., 2008). Thus, women who have had many sex partners and those whose first sexual intercourse experience occurred early in life are most vulnerable to cervical cancer because these behaviors expose them to HPV. Men's sex practices can also increase female partners' likelihood of getting cervical cancer. When men have multiple sex partners, specifically with women who have had many sex partners, their female sex partners are at increased risk of cervical cancer.

HPV is a cause of some oral cancers as well. In the past 20 years, the proportion of oral cancers associated with HPV increased dramatically, from 16% in the late 1980s to 73% in the early 2000s (Chaturvedi et al., 2011). In 2017, new diagnoses of HPV-related oral cancer exceeded that of HPV-related cervical cancer (CDC, 2020d). Furthermore, HPV-related oral cancer is twice as common in men as women (Chaturvedi et al., 2018). Oral HPV is likely spread through oral sex, but a vaccine is available for HPV, which could make a dramatic difference in both the cervical and oral cancers associated with this infection. Unfortunately, the rate of vaccination in the United States is below 20% among young adults, who are a vulnerable age group. In addition, oral HPV infections are more likely to persist among smokers (D'Souza & Dempsey, 2011). Thus, sexual behavior—in combination with tobacco use—can substantially increase the likelihood of oral cancers.

Men's sexual practices can also increase the risk for prostate cancer. Karin Rosenblatt and her associates (Rosenblatt et al., 2000) found a significant positive

relationship between prostate cancer and lifetime number of female sex partners (but not male sex partners), early age of first intercourse, and prior infection with gonorrhea. However, they found no risk for prostate cancer associated with lifetime frequency of sexual intercourse.

Psychosocial Risk Factors in Cancer

Since the days of the Greek physician Galen (AD 131–201), people have speculated about the relationship between personality traits and certain diseases, including cancer. However, that speculation does not match the findings from scientific research. For example, a prospective study from the Swedish Twin Registry (Hansen et al., 2005) found that neither extraversion nor neuroticism—as measured by the Eysenck Personality Inventory—predicted an increased likelihood of cancer.

This study and its findings are fairly typical of attempts to relate psychosocial factors to cancer incidence and mortality. During the past 30 or 40 years, a number of researchers investigated the association between a variety of psychological factors and cancer development and prognosis (Dammeyer & Zettler, 2018). Some studies have identified various personality factors that seemed to relate to the development of cancer, but large-scale studies and reviews of the topic (Aro et al., 2005; Garssen, 2004; Levin & Kissane, 2006; Stürmer et al., 2006) have found only a weak association between any psychosocial factor and cancer. Factors showing the strongest relationship come from negative emotionality and the tendency to repress (rather than express) emotion. However, these traits show a stronger relationship to response to a diagnosis of cancer than to the development of cancer. Thus, the evidence of a relationship between personality to cancer is weak (Johansen, 2018).

IN SUMMARY

Cigarette smoking is the leading risk factor for lung cancer. Although not all cigarette smokers die of lung cancer and some nonsmokers develop this disease, clear evidence exists that smokers have a greatly increased chance of developing some form of cancer, particularly lung cancer. The more cigarettes people smoke per day and the more years they continue this practice, the more they are at risk.

The relationship between diet and the development of cancer is complex, with some types of

food presenting dangers for the development of cancer and others offering some protection. “Natural” foods avoid the risk of preservatives but increase the likelihood of other toxins. A high-fat diet is related to colon and breast cancer, but a diet that produces overweight or obesity is a risk for a variety of cancers, including colorectal, esophageal, breast (in postmenopausal women), endometrial, and kidney cancer. Some dietary components can protect against cancer, including fruits and vegetables. The evidence for specific nutrients in foods is less persuasive, and taking supplements generally offers no protection.

Alcohol is probably only a weak risk factor for cancer. Nevertheless, it has a synergistic effect with cigarette smoking; when the two are combined, the total relative risk is much greater than the risks of the two factors added together. Lack of physical activity and high exposure to ultraviolet light are additional risk factors for cancer. Also, certain sexual behaviors, such as the number of lifetime sex partners, relate to cervical, oral, and prostate cancers, as well as to cancers associated with AIDS.

In general, psychosocial factors show only weak relationships to cancer incidence. Negative emotionality and repression of emotion may contribute to the development of cancer, but the relationship is not strong.

APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

1. Construct a personal plan to alter your behaviors to lower your risk of developing cancer, addressing each of the behavioral factors.

10-5 Living with Cancer

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 10-11** Describe the advantages and drawbacks to the most common treatments for cancer
- 10-12** Describe three factors that are associated with a good adjustment to a diagnosis of cancer and three factors that are associated with a poor diagnosis

10-13 Discuss the importance of social support for cancer patients and survivors and the best sources for social support

As Steve Jobs did in 2003, more than a million Americans receive a diagnosis of cancer each year (ACS, 2020). Most of these people receive their diagnosis with feelings of fear, anxiety, and anger, partly because they fear the disease and partly because current cancer treatments produce unpleasant effects for many cancer patients. Steve Jobs, for example, refused surgery for his pancreatic cancer for almost a year because of fears surrounding the treatment. Psychologists assist patients in coping with their emotional reactions to a cancer diagnosis, provide **social support** to patients and families, and help patients prepare for the negative side effects of some cancer treatments.

Problems with Medical Treatments for Cancer

Nearly all medical treatments for cancer have negative side effects that may add stress to the lives of cancer patients, their friends, and their families. The three most common therapies are also the three most stressful: surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy. In recent years, some **oncologists** have added hormonal treatment and immunotherapy to their arsenal of treatment regimens, but these newer treatments are generally not yet as effective as surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy.

Surgery is a common treatment recommendation when cancerous growth has not yet metastasized and when physicians have some confidence that the surgical procedure will be successful in making the tumor more manageable. Cancer patients who undergo surgery are likely to experience distress, rejection, and fears, and they often receive less emotional support than other surgery patients. These reactions are especially likely for patients with breast (Wimberly et al., 2005) and prostate cancers (Couper, 2007) because of the sexual implications of their surgery. Postsurgery stress and depression lead to lower levels of immunity, which may prolong recovery time and increase vulnerability to other disorders (Antoni & Lutgendorf, 2007). Observers noted a marked decline in Steve Jobs’s appearance following his liver transplant surgery in 2009, due possibly to both the cancer and compromised immune functioning (Lauerman, 2011).

Radiation also has severe side effects. Many patients who receive radiation therapy anticipate their treatment with fear and anxiety, dreading loss of hair, burns,



Negative side effects of chemotherapy such as hair loss add to the stress of cancer patients.

nausea, vomiting, fatigue, and sterility. These outcomes can occur, so patients' fears are not unreasonable. However, patients are seldom adequately prepared for their radiation treatments, and thus, their fears and anxieties may exaggerate the severity of these side effects.

Chemotherapy has some of the same negative side effects as radiation, so both the diagnosis and treatment of cancer often precipitate stressful reactions in cancer patients. Cancer patients treated with chemotherapy experience some combination of nausea, vomiting, fatigue, loss of coordination, decreased ability to concentrate, weight change, loss of appetite, hair loss, sleep problems, depression, and anxiety. Not only do these negative effects create problems in adjusting to a diagnosis of cancer but also patients' expectations of the negative effects of chemotherapy (Olver et al., 2005) and their beliefs about the nature of the disease (Thuné-Boyle et al., 2006) contribute to distress and adjustment.

Adjusting to a Diagnosis of Cancer

Adjusting to a diagnosis of cancer is a challenge for everyone, but some people have more difficulties than others. Others, like Steve Jobs, may appear to ultimately cope well with a cancer diagnosis. Did Steve's personality—often described as confident and excessively optimistic—play a role in his adjustment to cancer?

Factors that predict a poor reaction to a diagnosis of cancer are the same factors that show some

relationship to the development of cancer—negative emotionality and social inhibition (Verma & Khan, 2007). If negative emotionality is a problem for adjustment, then optimism should be an advantage, and research generally supports this hypothesis. Optimism is strongly related to adjusting well to a diagnosis of cancer (Carver et al., 2005), but its relationship to long-term outcome is less clear (Segerstrom, 2005, 2007). This difference may arise from the difficulty of the task of adjusting to cancer treatment or from miscalculations on the part of optimists concerning the course and outcome of their treatments (Winterling et al., 2008). When outcomes are disappointing, optimists may find adjustment more difficult than those who have more realistic expectations. However, optimism accounts for only a small-to-moderate amount of the variance in emotional adjustment for cancer survivors (Gallagher et al. 2019), but the cognitive construct of mastery also contributes to resilience.

These findings are consistent with reviews of research on a “fighting spirit,” which reflects both an optimistic outlook, a belief that a cancer is controllable, which is consistent with the concept of mastery. While a fighting spirit predicts better adjustment in early-stage cancer (O'Brien & Moorey, 2010), it appears to confer no advantage for long-term survival (Coyne & Tennen, 2010). This conclusion led one research team to advise, “People with cancer should not feel pressured into adopting particular coping styles to improve survival or reduce the risk of recurrence” (Petticrew et al., 2002, p. 1066).

After diagnosis, people with cancer show a variety of responses and different trajectories in adjusting and functioning over the course of their treatment and afterward (Helgeson et al., 2004). Most cancer survivors report improvement in their functioning over time, but some long-term survivors attribute problems with low energy, pain, and sexual functioning to their cancers (Phipps et al., 2008). Even eight years after cancer diagnosis, survivors report some problems, which are much more likely to be physical complications rather than psychological problems (Schroevers et al., 2006).

The same emotional factors that enhance the survival of heart disease patients may not be similarly helpful to cancer patients. That is, the calm expression of emotion that may be good advice for cardiovascular patients may not be a good choice for cancer patients; expression of emotion seems to be a better strategy. For example, for children (Aldridge & Roesch, 2007) and for men coping with prostate cancer (Roesch et al., 2005), use of emotion-focused coping did not present the disadvantages that this strategy typically does (see Chapter 5 for a discussion of coping strategies). Expression of both positive and negative emotions can be beneficial (Quartana et al., 2006). However, expressing some negative emotions may do more harm than good (Lieberman & Goldstein, 2006); expressing anger seems to lead to a better adjustment, whereas expressing fear and anxiety relates to lower quality of life and higher depression. Being able to express emotions and being guided to do so in the most helpful manner require appropriate social support.

Social Support for Cancer Patients

What single factor reduces a man's chances of dying from cancer by 27%, and a woman's chances of dying from cancer by 19%?

Marriage is the factor. Both male and female cancer patients have better odds of survival if they are married than if they are not. Why?

Researchers examined this question in a longitudinal sample of over 800,000 adults diagnosed with invasive cancer (Gomez et al., 2016). One possible reason why married cancer patients fare better than their single counterparts is because marriage offers economic benefits, such as better health care options or better access to treatments. However, these researchers found that the marriage benefit had little to do with economics. Rather, it appeared that the emotional and instrumental social support generally accompanying a marriage was responsible for the survival benefits.

Married patients are more likely to have someone available to drive them to appointments, encourage them to take medications, offer healthy meals, or provide emotional support. Many other studies show that social support, such as that provided by a spouse, can help cancer patients adjust to their condition, and support from other family and friends can be beneficial as well. For example, in the context of breast cancer, women with greater structural social support—that is, with larger social support networks—have slower cancer progression than women with less structural social support (Nausheen et al., 2009). Social support is an important factor for men as well; prostate cancer survivors who perceive more available social support from others manifest greater emotional well-being over time (Zhou et al., 2010). Unfortunately, not all social support attempts by friends and family are beneficial for people with cancer. Sometimes partners' attempts to protect spouses from the reality of their illness are not helpful (Hagedoorn et al., 2000). Thus, social support from families may or may not provide the type of support people with cancer need. Many people with cancer turn to support groups or therapists to provide emotional support.

Professionals such as psychologists, nurses, or oncologists may lead support groups, but often these groups consist of other individuals who are cancer survivors. Some studies indicate that some people profit from support groups more than others. For example, women with breast cancer who lacked adequate marital support profited more from peer group support than from support of their partners, whereas women with strong support from their partners had poorer adjustments when they participated in a peer discussion group (Helgeson et al., 2000). A systematic review of the value of peer support groups for cancer survivors (Hoey et al., 2008) indicated that such groups could be but were not always helpful. With the growth of technology, online support groups have grown, and one type is the online health community, some of which are oriented toward cancer (Zhang et al., 2017). Online groups offer the same type of support that face-to-face groups do: emotional, informational, and instrumental support. In general, face-to-face support delivered by an individual and online groups demonstrated the best outcomes, but all types of groups can be effective for some individuals.

Psychological Interventions for Cancer Patients

Psychologists have used both individual and group techniques to help cancer patients cope with their diagnosis. To be effective, an intervention should accomplish at

least one of two objectives: It should improve emotional well-being, increase survival time, or both. To what extent do psychological interventions succeed at these two objectives?

Two reviews (Edwards et al., 2008; Manne & Andrykowski, 2006) conclude that psychological interventions generally yield short-term benefits in helping cancer patients manage the distress related to their condition. Furthermore, some psychological interventions for women with breast cancer improve physiological outcomes, such as cortisol responses and measures of immune functioning (McGregor & Antoni, 2009).

Some psychological interventions focus on cognitive behavioral stress management skills, whereas others focus on providing social support and an opportunity to express emotions. There is evidence that each of these types of interventions improves some outcomes (Edwards et al., 2008). For example, a program that targeted emotional regulation (Cameron et al., 2007) indicated success. Cognitive behavioral therapy significantly decreased depression in breast cancer survivors (Xiao et al., 2017). A brief cognitive behavioral intervention focusing on communication, coping, and boosting social support (Manne et al., 2017) showed significant effects for reducing cancer-specific distress and overall well-being. However, none of these approaches may be the best approach for everyone. As one research team asked, “Does one size fit all?” (Zimmerman, Heinrichs, & Baucom, 2007, p. 225). This question highlights the need to match the characteristics and needs of people with cancer to a psychotherapy, support, educational, or multicomponent program that will be effective for each person.

Although psychological interventions can improve short-term emotional adjustment, there is less evidence that psychological interventions prolong the life span of people with cancer. The possibility that interventions could have such an effect arose when David Spiegel and colleagues (Spiegel et al., 1989) conducted a multicomponent intervention to help breast cancer patients adjust to the stressful aspects of their disease and their treatment. Not only was the intervention successful in managing pain, anxiety, and depression but also the women in the intervention group lived longer than those in the comparison group. That finding prompted researchers to examine how psychosocial and CAM (complementary and alternative medicine) interventions might prolong the life of those with cancer (see Chapter 8 for a discussion of integrative cancer treatments). Plausible mechanisms include the effect on the immune system

and improvements in functioning that allow cancer patients to adhere to their medical treatment regimen (Antoni & Lutgendorf, 2007; Spiegel, 2004; Spiegel & Geise-Davis, 2003).

However, the basic finding that psychosocial interventions prolong life is now in question. Although one psychological intervention with women with early-stage breast cancer significantly reduced risk for recurrence and death at an 11-year follow-up (Andersen et al., 2008), large-scale reviews find little evidence that psychological interventions reliably extend survival time for breast cancer patients (Edwards et al., 2004; Smedslund & Ringdal, 2004). Despite a plausible mechanism for such action and despite the hope that such a benefit is possible (Coyne et al., 2007), little evidence exists at this point that psychological interventions prolong the life of those with cancer (Edwards et al., 2008). Thus, the value of psychological interventions lies mainly in improving the *quality* rather than the quantity of a cancer patient's life.

IN SUMMARY

After people receive a cancer diagnosis, they typically experience fear, anxiety, depression, and feelings of helplessness. The standard medical treatments for cancer—surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation—all have negative side effects that often produce added stress and discomfort. These side effects include loss of hair, nausea, fatigue, sterility, and other negative conditions. Receiving social support from family and friends, joining support groups, and receiving emotional support through psychological interventions probably help some people with cancer to increase psychological functioning, decrease depression and anxiety, manage pain, and enhance quality of life. Little evidence exists that psychotherapy can increase survival time.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Make a list of suggestions for someone who has received a diagnosis of cancer that will help the person seek appropriate treatment and manage the negative effects of the treatment.

Questions

This chapter has addressed five basic questions:

1. What is cancer?

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by the presence of new (neoplastic) cells that grow and spread beyond control. These cells may be either benign or malignant, but both types of neoplastic cells are dangerous. Malignant cells are capable of metastasizing and spreading through the blood or lymph to other organs of the body, thus making malignancies life threatening.

2. Are cancer death rates increasing or decreasing?

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for about 21% of deaths. During the first nine and a half decades of the 20th century, cancer death rates in the United States rose threefold, but since the mid-1990s, death rates have declined, especially for cancers of the lung, colon and rectum, breast, and prostate—the four leading sites for cancer deaths in the United States. Lung cancer death rates for men began to decrease before that of women, but the decline now applies to both.

3. What are the inherent and environmental risk factors for cancer?

The uncontrollable risk factors for cancer include family history, ethnic background, and advancing age. Family history is a factor in many types of cancer; inheritance of a mutated form of a specific gene increases the risk for breast cancer twofold to threefold. Ethnic background is also a factor; compared with European Americans, African Americans have a significantly higher rate of mortality from cancer, but other ethnic groups have lower rates. Advancing age is the single most powerful mortality risk for cancer, but age is also the leading risk for death from cardiovascular and other diseases. Environmental exposure to airborne pollutants, radiation, and infectious organisms constitutes significant risks for cancer if the exposure is heavy and prolonged.

4. What are the behavioral risk factors for cancer?

More than half of all cancer deaths in the United States have been attributed to either smoking or unwise lifestyle choices, such as diet and sedentary lifestyle. Smoking cigarettes raises the risk for lung

cancer by a factor of almost 25; but smoking also accounts for other cancer deaths.

The relationship between diet and cancer is complex: Diet can increase or decrease the risk for cancer. Toxins and contaminants in food raise the risks, but a diet high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, beans, and seeds and low in fat, red meat, processed meat, and salt tends to be associated with lowered risk for a variety of cancers. A diet that leads to overweight or obesity raises the risk. Alcohol is not as strong a risk for cancer as diet, but combining alcohol with smoking sharply increases the risk. A sedentary lifestyle also presents a risk, especially for breast cancer. Exposure to ultraviolet light and sexual behaviors can increase the risks for various cancers. Research has also revealed a weak link between negative emotionality, depression, and cancer.

5. How can cancer patients be helped in coping with their disease?

Cancer patients usually benefit from social support from spouse, family, and health care providers, but the type and timing of support affect its benefits. Support groups offer another type of support that is beneficial to some cancer patients, especially in allowing the expression of emotion. Therapists can use cognitive behavioral methods to assist cancer patients in developing coping strategies to help them deal with some of the negative aspects of cancer treatments and adjusting to their disease, thus increasing the quality of life for cancer patients. However, no evidence exists that psychosocial factors can increase survival time.

Suggested Readings

- American Cancer Society. (2020). *Cancer facts and figures 2020*. Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society. This yearly publication provides extensive, updated information about cancer in the United States with some international comparisons.
- Antoni, M. H., & Lutgendorf, S. (2007). Psychosocial factors in disease progression in cancer. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 16, 42–46. This brief article focuses on the influence of psychosocial factors and how these factors may affect the biology of cancer.
- Danaei, G., Vander Hoorn, S., Lopez, A. D., Murray, C. J. L., & Ezzati, M. (2005). Causes of cancer in the

world: Comparative risk assessment of nine behavioral and environmental risk factors. *Lancet*, 366, 1784–1793. For those who want an international perspective, this article examines nine behavioral and environmental factors and traces the differing rates of cancer in countries throughout the world related to these factors.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2010). *A report of the Surgeon General: How*

tobacco smoke causes disease: What it means to you. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This short and engaging article details, in easy-to-understand language, the pathways by which tobacco increases risk for several types of cancer, as well as a multitude of other health problems.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 11-1** Identify the factors that affect the impact of chronic illness on the patient, as well as interventions that can help chronic illness patients
- 11-2** Identify the factors that affect the impact of chronic illness on the family, as well as interventions that can help family members
- 11-3** Understand the symptoms and types of Alzheimer's disease, as well as the risk factors for the development and progression of Alzheimer's disease
- 11-4** Identify treatments and interventions that can help people who live with Alzheimer's disease
- 11-5** Recognize the burden that Alzheimer's disease places on caregivers and interventions that can help ease this burden
- 11-6** Understand the difference between type 1 and type 2 diabetes, in terms of risk factors, prevalence, and management of the illness
- 11-7** Identify the factors that relate to the management of diabetes, as well as interventions that can help
- 11-8** Understand the symptoms of asthma, as well as the risk factors that put a person at risk for the development of asthma as well as an asthma attack
- 11-9** Identify the factors that relate to the management of asthma, as well as interventions that can help people who live with asthma
- 11-10** Understand the symptoms and physiology of HIV and AIDS, as well as the major routes of infection
- 11-11** Identify the role that psychologists play in both the primary and secondary prevention of HIV and AIDS, and interventions that help people living with HIV and AIDS
- 11-12** Understand the unique issues experienced by people who face death
- 11-13** Critique Kübler-Ross's stage theories of dying and bereavement
- 11-14** Identify interventions that may help people adjust to a terminal illness

CHAPTER 11

Living with Chronic Illness

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Nick Jonas

The Impact of Chronic Disease

- Impact on the Patient
- Impact on the Family

Living with Alzheimer's Disease

- Helping the Patient
- Helping the Family

Adjusting to Diabetes

- The Physiology of Diabetes
- The Impact of Diabetes
- Health Psychology's Involvement with Diabetes

The Impact of Asthma

- The Disease of Asthma
- Managing Asthma

Dealing with HIV and AIDS

- Incidence and Mortality Rates for HIV/AIDS
- Symptoms of HIV and AIDS
- The Transmission of HIV
- Psychologists' Role in the HIV Epidemic

Facing Death

- Adjusting to Terminal Illness
- Grieving

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on six basic questions:

1. What is the impact of chronic disease on patients and families?
2. What is the impact of Alzheimer's disease?
3. What is involved in adjusting to diabetes?
4. How does asthma affect the lives of people with this disease?
5. How can HIV infection be managed?
6. What adaptations do people make to dying and grieving?

Chronic diseases cause 7 in 10 deaths each year in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2009), and 60% of adults live with at least one chronic illness and 42% of adults live with multiple chronic illnesses (Buttorff, Ruder, & Bauman, 2017). Although the prevalence of chronic illness is highest among those 65 years and older, younger adults are not spared: in fact, about one in five adults under the age of 45 live with multiple chronic illnesses. Chronic illness also affects children, with over 25% having some chronic physical health problem (Van Cleave, Gortmaker, & Perrin, 2010).

Nick Jonas is but one of millions in the United States who live with a chronic illness. Cardiovascular disease and cancer, discussed in the prior chapters, are two common chronic illnesses, and living with these conditions shares elements of living with the chronic diseases we detail in this chapter, such as Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, asthma, and HIV/AIDS. These and other chronic illnesses vary in physiology, but the emotional and physical adjustments, the disruption of family dynamics, the need for continued medical care, and the necessity of self-management also apply to chronic diseases such as arthritis, heart disease, cancer, kidney disease, multiple sclerosis, head injury, and spinal cord injury.

11-1 The Impact of Chronic Disease

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 11-1 Identify the factors that affect the impact of chronic illness on the patient, as well as interventions that can help chronic illness patients
- 11-2 Identify the factors that affect the impact of chronic illness on the family, as well as interventions that can help family members



Real-World Profile of **NICK JONAS**



Paras Griffin/Getty Images Entertainment/Getty Images

When Nick Jonas was 13 and on tour with the Jonas Brothers, one of his brothers noticed something was wrong. Up until then, Nick had been healthy. But now he was continually thirsty, had lost 15 pounds, and was having unusually wild mood swings.

Nick went to the doctor at the suggestion of his family, where he learned that his blood sugar was nine times the normal level. That day, Nick was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, a chronic illness that he knew nothing about. Had he not sought treatment, he would have been close to entering into a coma.

"I had an emotional breakdown since I really had no idea what diabetes was all about. I wondered, 'Why me?'" His family, too, was unfamiliar with type 1 diabetes, saying, "It was really hard on all of us because we didn't know how it would

affect our daily lives" (RCHSD, 2014).

Nick became one of over a million Americans who live with type 1 diabetes, a condition in which the body produces insufficient amounts of insulin, a hormone required for the body to utilize blood sugar. Management of type 1 diabetes, like the management of other chronic illnesses, requires lifelong attention. In Nick's case, he needs to check his blood sugar levels 10 to 12 times per day and uses a device attached to his arm to administer insulin when needed.

With a busy schedule, adherence to these behaviors requires a lot of support as well as dedication. "I found out very quickly it's a very manageable disease ... as long as you're really diligent" (Longman, 2019). Like many people who live with a chronic illness, Nick also relies on his family for help. "My family has been an incredible support from the time I was diagnosed to now... I am never afraid to rely on them when certain situations come up" (NIH National Library of Medicine, 2017).

Nick has also been a support to others with type 1 diabetes, forming Beyond Type 1, a philanthropy that strives to help others like him. For this effort, Nick Jonas was the recipient of a 2017 Disney Hero Award and continues to serve as an inspiration for others who are forced to deal with the complex issues of living with a chronic illness.

Chronic disease places an enormous physical and emotional burden on a patient, as well as a patient's family. Some theorists describe the diagnosis of a chronic illness as a crisis (Moos & Schaefer, 1984). Other theorists suggest that people pass through several stages in their adjustment to chronic disease, but as we will learn, there is little support for stage models of adjustment to chronic disease. Instead, adjustment seems to be a dynamic process influenced by many factors, including the characteristics of the disease, such as rapidity of progress; characteristics of the individual, such as a dispositional optimism; and characteristics of the person's social environment, such as social support. Thus, adjustment to chronic disease is a variable process, and many individual factors shape how people adjust and adapt to a chronic illness (Parker, Schaller, & Hansmann, 2003).

Impact on the Patient

Adapting to a chronic disease includes dealing with the symptoms of the disease, managing the stresses of treatment, living as normal a life as possible, and facing the possibility of death. Adjustment to some chronic diseases is more difficult than others because of symptom severity and the demands of coping with symptoms. However, some chronic illnesses may influence quality of life less than healthy people imagine (Damschroder, Zikmund-Fisher, & Ubel, 2005). Research that evaluated the functioning of large groups of patients with various chronic illnesses (Arnold et al., 2004; Heijmans et al., 2004) found similarities and differences among people with different chronic diseases. For some chronic diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes, people reported levels of functioning similar to those with no

chronic disease. For example, Nick Jonas can maintain a busy lifestyle despite living with diabetes. However, people with heart disease, rheumatoid arthritis, and cancer experienced more intrusive symptoms than did those with hypertension, asthma, or diabetes. Indeed, the psychological functioning appears to matter more than physical functioning in determining the quality of life of patients with chronic disease, highlighting the important role of adaptation and coping (Arnold et al., 2004). Using a variety of coping strategies allows people to deal with the stresses of chronic disease (Heijmans et al., 2004); however, active coping strategies tend to produce better results than avoidant strategies (Stanton, Revenson, & Tennen, 2007).

Receiving treatment for chronic diseases also requires adaptation. Interactions with the health care system are likely to create frustrations and problems for people with chronic illness (Parchman, Noel, & Lee, 2005). When patients must interact with the health care system, they tend to feel deprived not only of their sense of competence and mastery but also of their rights and privileges. That is, sick people begin to feel like “non-persons” and to experience loss of personal control and threats to self-esteem (Stanton et al., 2007).

Developing and maintaining relationships with health care providers also present challenges, for both patients and practitioners. The medical system and people’s experience of illness both focus on acute conditions. This experience may lead sick people to believe in the power of modern medicine and to be optimistic about cures. Physicians and other health care workers usually share this attitude (Bickel-Swenson, 2007), which may create a positive climate of trust and optimism for their treatment. Conversely, people with a chronic illness may have a hopeless and even helpless attitude toward their condition—modern medicine can offer them no cure. Health care professionals, too, tend to orient themselves toward providing cures. When they cannot do so, they may feel less positive about those whom they cannot cure (Bickel-Swenson, 2007; Turner & Kelly, 2000). These feelings can create a difficult climate for treatment, with patients questioning and resisting health care providers, and providers feeling frustrated and annoyed with patients who fail to follow treatment regimens and do not get better. Fortunately, younger physicians may be less likely to hold such negative attitudes (Lloyd-Williams, Dogra, & Petersen, 2004), which will benefit treatment and may help to counteract the growing difficulty in negotiating the U.S. health care system experienced by people with chronic conditions.

People with chronic diseases often adopt several coping strategies to deal with their illness. A variety of strategies can be successful, but some work better in certain situations. For example, avoidance-oriented coping, such as denial or ignoring the problem, is typically a less effective strategy than problem-focused strategies, such as planning and information seeking (Livneh & Antonak, 2005; Stanton et al., 2007). However, when events are uncontrollable, avoidance coping may be effective in easing negative emotions; when events are controllable, this strategy would be a could lead to problems.

Physicians often feel inadequately prepared to help patients deal with these emotional reactions (Bickel-Swenson, 2007; Turner & Kelly, 2000). Such deficits have led to two types of supplements: psychological interventions and support groups. For many chronic illnesses, health psychologists have created interventions that emphasize the management of emotions such as anxiety and depression. Support groups also address emotional needs by providing emotional support to patients or family members who must confront an illness with little chance of a cure. These services supplement conventional health care and help chronically ill patients maintain compliance with the prescribed regimen and sustain a working relationship with health care providers. Reviews of studies dealing with the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions with cancer patients (Osborn, Demoncada, & Feuerstein, 2006; Kalter et al., 2018; Teo, Krishnan, & Lee, 2019) and their families (Badr & Krebs, 2013; Barlow & Ellard, 2004; Fu et al., 2017) indicate that cognitive behavioral interventions provide effective assistance in helping people cope with chronic diseases. Furthermore, there is also evidence that Internet-administered interventions can help alleviate distress and improve disease control across several chronic health conditions (Beatty & Lambert, 2013).

A major impact of chronic illness involves the changes that occur in how people think of themselves; that is, the diagnosis of a chronic disease changes self-perception. Chronic illness and treatment force many patients to reevaluate their lives, relationships, and body image (Livneh & Antonak, 2005). Being diagnosed with a chronic illness represents a loss (Murray, 2001), and people adapt to such losses through a process of grieving (Rentz, Krikorian, & Keys, 2005). Finding meaning in the experience of loss is more extensive than grieving; but developing an understanding of the meaning of the loss is a common part of coping with chronic disease. Some chronically ill people never move

past the grief (Murray, 2001). Other people reconstruct the meaning of their lives in positive ways.

People with chronic diseases often find some positive aspect to their situation (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). Part of healthy adjustment is accepting the changes that disease brings, but some research (Fournier, de Ridder, & Bensing, 2002) found that positive expectancies and even unrealistic optimism were advantages in coping with chronic disease. As Annette Stanton and her colleagues (2007, p. 568) summarized, “A disease that disrupts life does not preclude the experience of joy.” Thus, some people manage to experience personal growth through loss and grief (Hogan & Schmidt, 2002), which relates to less depression and greater well-being (Helgeson, Reynolds, & Tomich, 2006). Nick Jonas, for example, was able to use his experiences to help form a supportive community and a foundation to help others living with diabetes. Furthermore, psychosocial interventions have been successful in allowing people to develop a sense of meaning and purpose in their experience with chronic illness (Park et al., 2019). The importance of finding positive aspects applies not only to patients with chronic diseases but also to their families and caregivers.

Impact on the Family

Illness requires adaptation not only for patients but also for their families. Families may react with grief and feel loss during the sick person’s lifetime because families see the person’s loss of abilities and sometimes the sense of self.

Involving family members in psychosocial interventions benefits the well-being of both the patient (Martire et al., 2010) and the family member (Martire et al., 2004). However, some interventions may be more effective than others. For example, interventions that emphasize communication and interactions—especially those affecting health—provide greater benefits for patients than interventions with other components (Martire & Schulz, 2007). People with chronic illness also benefit from a type of support described as “invisible” (Bolger, Zuckerman, & Kessler, 2000). Invisible support is support that a provider reports offering, but the patient does not report receiving it; this dynamic occurs when a provider’s support is given in a manner that is not perceived by the patient as an obvious attempt to help, which may help make the patient feel less helpless and more efficacious. This type of interaction may be easier to manage when a partner

is not ill; a sick partner needs help but being the obvious recipient of assistance makes that support stressful as well as helpful. Therefore, chronic illness presents difficulties even to well-intentioned, caring partners.

Although the rates of childhood diseases declined dramatically in the 20th century, a significant number of children still experience chronic diseases (Brace et al., 2000). The majority of these illnesses are relatively minor, but many children experience severe chronic conditions such as cancer, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and diabetes—conditions that limit mobility and activity. These illnesses bring changes in the lives of the entire family. Parents and siblings try to “normalize” family life while coping with therapy for the sick child (Knafl & Deatrick, 2002). However, parents may experience shock, grief, and anger. Such parents face the task of providing support and care, plus the adjustments that chronically ill patients face in finding meaning in the experience of illness. Siblings also face challenges in adjusting to the illness of a family member, tending to notice the differences between their families and “normal” families and feeling some combination of sympathy for and resentment of their sick sibling (Waite-Jones & Madill, 2008a).

For adults, the changes that come with illness can alter their relationships and redefine their identity, but for children who are sick, illness can be even more distressing and disruptive. For some children, the restrictions that come with chronic illness are very difficult, leading to isolation, depression, and distress, whereas other children cope more effectively (Melamed, Kaplan, & Fogel, 2001). Younger children may have difficulty understanding the nature of their disease, and older children and adolescents may resent the restrictions that their disease imposes. Health care providers and parents can help these children make adjustments by offering alternative or modified activities.

Families of sick children face problems similar to couples: They must continue their relationships and manage the problems of caregiving (Knafl & Deatrick, 2002). A child who is ill requires a great deal of emotional support, most of which is supplied by mothers. These efforts can leave mothers so drained that they have little emotional energy left for their husbands, which can leave husbands feeling abandoned and excluded from the family. Fathers tend to cope by concealing their distress and through avoidance, which is seldom an effective coping strategy (Waite-Jones & Madill, 2008b).

Families can follow several recommendations to facilitate adjustment to a chronic disease. Families can

try to be flexible and establish a routine that is as close to normal as they can manage (Knafl & Deatrick, 2002). One example of this would be to put the disease into the background and focus on the ways in which the sick child is similar to other children and other family members. Magnifying the ways that the disease makes the child different and focusing on the changes to family routine tend to lead to poorer adaptations. Families should find ways to meet sick children's needs without reinforcing their anxiety and depression (Brace et al., 2000). Like individuals with chronic illness, families tend to make a better adjustment if they focus on finding meaning and some positive aspect in their situation (Ylvén, Björck-Åkesson, & Granlund, 2006).

IN SUMMARY

Chronic diseases bring changes that require adaptation for both the person with the disease and family members. Chronically ill patients must manage their symptoms, seek appropriate health care, and adapt to the psychological changes that occur in this situation. Health care professionals may neglect the social and emotional needs of chronically ill patients, attending instead to their physical needs. Health psychologists and support groups help provide for the emotional needs associated with chronic illness. The adaptations that occur may lead to prolonged feelings of loss and grief or to changes that constitute personal growth.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Construct a profile of two chronic illness patients: one patient who is likely to adjust well to chronic illness and another patient who is not likely to adjust well.

11-2 Living with Alzheimer's Disease

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 11-3** Understand the symptoms and types of Alzheimer's disease, as well as the risk factors for the development and progression of Alzheimer's disease

- 11-4** Identify treatments and interventions that can help people who live with Alzheimer's disease

- 11-5** Recognize the burden that Alzheimer's disease places on caregivers and interventions that can help ease this burden

One of the most visible people to live with Alzheimer's disease was former U.S. president Ronald Reagan. During his presidency, Reagan had declared the month of November to be National Alzheimer's Disease Month in an effort to bring greater awareness to the condition. Unexpectedly to both Reagan and his family, he was diagnosed eleven years later with Alzheimer's disease. The impact of Alzheimer's disease on Reagan and his family was very similar to the impact it has on the 5 million other Americans who live with the condition. His wife, Nancy, became his primary caregiver, and this burden came with the loss of her husband as she had previously known him and an increasing sense of loneliness (Ellis, 2004). Thus, the impact of Alzheimer's is felt by the patient, but perhaps more so by the patient's family and loved ones.

Alzheimer's disease, a degenerative disease of the brain, is a major source of impairment among older people (Mayeaux, 2003). This disease varies in prevalence among countries but remains a major source of cognitive disability in both industrialized and developing countries. Medical researchers identified the brain abnormalities that underlie Alzheimer's disease in the late 19th century. In 1907, a German physician, Alois Alzheimer, reported on the relationship between autopsy findings of neurological abnormalities and psychiatric symptoms before death. Shortly after his report, other researchers began to call the disorder *Alzheimer's disease*.

The disease can be diagnosed definitively only through autopsy, but brain imaging technology is capable of diagnosing Alzheimer's disease with close to 90% accuracy (Vemuri et al., 2008). In addition, Alzheimer's patients show behavioral symptoms of cognitive impairment and memory loss that may lead to a provisional diagnosis (Mayeaux, 2003). During autopsy, a microscopic examination of the brain reveals "plaques" and tangles of nerve fibers in the cerebral cortex and hippocampus. These tangles of nerve fibers are the physical basis for Alzheimer's disease.

The biggest risk factor for Alzheimer's disease is age; the incidence of Alzheimer's disease rises sharply with

advancing age. The prevalence of Alzheimer's disease is low for those under age 75—about 3% of people in this age group. However, prevalence of Alzheimer's disease increases dramatically to 17% among people aged 75 to 84 and to 32% among people aged 85 and older (Alzheimer's Association, 2020). The increase seems not to continue at the same rate; people in their 90s who have not developed signs of the disease are not nearly as likely to do so as people between ages 65 and 85 (Hall et al., 2005). The high number of people over 85 years old who have symptoms of probable Alzheimer's disease presents a pessimistic picture for the aging population in many industrialized and some developing countries, where Alzheimer's seems destined to become a large public health problem (Wimo et al., 2013).

The underlying mechanisms in the development of the disease are not yet completely understood, but two different forms of the disease exist: an early-onset version that occurs before age 60 and a late-onset version that occurs after age 60. The early-onset type is quite rare, representing fewer than 5% of all Alzheimer's patients (Bertram & Tanzi, 2005). Early-onset Alzheimer's may arise from a genetic defect, and at least three different genes on chromosomes 1, 14, and 21 contribute.

The late-onset type has symptoms similar to the early-onset type but begins after age 60, as President Reagan's disease did. Susceptibility to this version of the disease also has a genetic component related to apolipoprotein ϵ , a protein involved in cholesterol metabolism (Bertram & Tanzi, 2005; Ertekin-Taner, 2007). One form of apolipoprotein, the $\epsilon 4$ form, affects accumulation of the amyloid ϵ protein, which forms the building blocks for amyloid plaque (Selkoe, 2007). This plaque seems to constitute the underlying pathology for Alzheimer's disease. The risk increases about three times for individuals who have one $\epsilon 4$ gene and about 15 times for individuals who have two. Older adults who do not have Alzheimer's disease but who carry the $\epsilon 4$ variant of this gene show lower levels of cognitive functioning than those with other variants of the gene (Small et al., 2004). The $\epsilon 2$ form of the gene may actually offer some protection against Alzheimer's disease.

These genetic factors increase a person's susceptibility to Alzheimer's disease, rather than guarantee it. A variety of environmental and behavioral factors also play a role in the development of Alzheimer's disease, interacting with the genetics of the disease. For example, having a stroke increases the risk, and so does head injury (Pope, Shue, & Beck, 2003). These risks may apply more strongly to people who carry the $\epsilon 4$ form of

the gene for apolipoprotein. Type 2 diabetes increases the risk for Alzheimer's disease, but the combination of $\epsilon 4$ apolipoprotein and diabetes raises the risk more than five times (Peila, Rodriguez, & Launer, 2002). The process of inflammation is also a risk for Alzheimer's, as it is for cardiovascular disease (Martins et al., 2006). This risk may accrue throughout life, with increased risk for people who experience prolonged bouts of inflammation, even during young or middle adulthood (Kamer et al., 2008). Fat intake during middle adulthood also increases the risk (Laitinen et al., 2006), but high cholesterol during older age has no relationship (Reitz et al., 2008). Physical activity—a protective risk factor for many other health problems—also appears to protect against the subsequent development of Alzheimer's disease (Qiu, Kivipelto, & von Strauss, 2011) and improves cognition among those with dementia (Groot et al., 2016).

Research into risk factors for Alzheimer's disease also reveals some protective factors. Cognitive activity decreases the risk, so people whose jobs demand a high level of cognitive processing are less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than others with less cognitively demanding jobs (see the Would You Believe . . . ? box). Low levels of alcohol consumption cut the risk in half in one study (Ruitenberg et al., 2002). Regular doses of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) also appear to decrease the risk, especially for people who carry the $\epsilon 4$ form of the apolipoprotein gene (Szekely et al., 2008). Therefore, it is possible to modify the genetic risk through this behavior. Many of the risks for Alzheimer's disease overlap with those for cardiovascular disease and cancer, and so do the protective factors. That is, a healthy lifestyle may offer protection for a range of disorders. **Table 11.1** presents a summary of these risks and protective factors.

Because the symptoms of Alzheimer's include a number of behavior problems that are also symptoms of psychiatric disorders, the disease can be difficult to diagnose. These symptoms occur in a majority of people with Alzheimer's disease (Weiner et al., 2005). In addition to memory loss, behavioral symptoms include agitation and irritability, sleep difficulties, delusions such as suspiciousness and paranoia, inappropriate sexual behavior, and hallucinations. People with Alzheimer's disease are more likely than others to engage in dangerous behavior (Starkstein et al., 2007). Even individuals with mild Alzheimer's disease show psychiatric symptoms similar to those with more severe cases (Shimabukuro, Awata, & Matsuoka, 2005). These behavioral

TABLE 11.1 Risks and Protective Factors for the Development of Alzheimer’s Disease

Risks	Protective Factors
Age—over age 65 presents increasing risk	
Inheriting apolipoprotein ε4	Inheriting apolipoprotein ε2
Stroke, head injury, or diabetes, especially for those who carry apolipoprotein ε4	
Inflammation	Taking anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
High-fat diet during middle adulthood	
Low levels of education	Higher levels of education
Cognitively undemanding job	Cognitively demanding job
	Low-to-moderate alcohol intake
A sedentary lifestyle	Many forms of physical activity, including walking

Would You BELIEVE...?

Using Your Mind May Help Prevent Losing Your Mind

Although age and genetics contribute to the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease, not everyone of the same age or even with the same genes is at equal risk. Your intelligence, education, job, and even your television viewing habits also contribute to the risk.

People with more education have a lower risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Because education and IQ are strongly related, separating the protective effect of education is not easy, but one study (Pavlik, Doody, Massman, & Chan, 2006) estimated that IQ score, not educational level, was a better predictor of the progression of Alzheimer’s disease. This result suggests that being intelligent offers some protection against this disease. Other research, however, hints that being intelligent is by no means the whole story.

What you do with your mind may be more important than how intelligent you are in combating

Alzheimer’s disease. For example, the complexity of people’s jobs affects the risk. In a study of pairs of twins, in which one twin had Alzheimer’s disease and the other did not (An-del et al., 2005), a distinguishing feature was the complexity of work performed by the unaffected twins. Because the study involved twins, genetic factors could not have played a role. The results indicated that those whose work involved more complexity, in terms of tasks with people or data, were likely to be unaffected by the disorder. A study of nearly 1,000 Swedish adults also confirmed this finding (Karp et al., 2009), suggesting that using your mind is protective. Would you also believe that retirement—which, for many people might mean stopping a cognitively complex job—may also increase the risk of cognitive decline? One recent study suggests that it does (Roberts et al., 2011).

Rest assured, working throughout your retirement years is not the only solution to preventing Alzheimer’s disease, as work complexity is not the only type of mental activity that may offer protection. A study of leisure time activities (Lindstrom et al., 2005) found that leisure activities during middle age could be protective or risky. People who participated in intellectually stimulating leisure and social activities were at lower risk of Alzheimer’s disease during their older years, whereas those who watched television were at increased risk. Indeed, each additional daily hour of television viewing raised the risk. So, using your mind during young and middle age may protect against the development of Alzheimer’s disease later in life—presenting another case of “use it or lose it.”

symptoms can be the source of much distress to patients as well as to their caregivers, and more severe behavioral symptoms predict shorter survival times (Weiner et al., 2005).

The most common psychiatric problem among Alzheimer's patients is depression, with as many as 20% of patients exhibiting symptoms of clinical depression (van Reekum et al., 2005). Depression may even precede the development of Alzheimer's disease, serving as a risk factor. The experience of negative mood is especially common among people in the early phases of the disease and in early-onset Alzheimer's. Those who retain awareness of their problems find their deterioration distressing and respond with feelings of helplessness and depression.

The memory loss that characterizes Alzheimer's patients may first appear in the form of small, ordinary failures of memory, which represent the early stages of the disease (Morris et al., 2001). This memory loss progresses to the point that Alzheimer's patients fail to recognize family members and forget how to perform even routine self-care.; former president Reagan experienced these losses. In the early phases of the disease, patients are usually aware of their memory failures, as Reagan was, making this symptom even more distressing.

The common symptoms of paranoia and suspiciousness may also relate to cognitive impairments. Alzheimer's patients may forget where they have put belongings and, because they cannot find their possessions, accuse others of taking them. However, suspicious and accusatory behaviors are not limited to misplaced belongings. Verbal aggression occurs in about 37% of Alzheimer's patients and physical aggression in about 17% (Weiner et al., 2005).

Helping the Patient

At present, Alzheimer's disease remains without a cure. However, incurability and untreatability are two different things; the physical symptoms and other accompanying disorders of Alzheimer's disease are treatable. Although researchers seek to develop drugs that prevent the disease, the primary focus of treatment is the use of drugs to slow its progress. Treatment approaches include drugs for delaying the progression of cognitive deficits and neuroleptic drugs for reducing agitation and aggression. Unfortunately, a systematic review (Seow & Gauthier, 2007) indicated that the drugs that target cognitive deficits offer only modest benefits.

For some patients, these drugs slow the progress of the disease by months or even a few years, but they do not stop or cure it. One drug (donepezil) slows the loss of neurons in the hippocampus, the brain location critical for formation of new memories. This finding explains why this drug is effective for some Alzheimer's patients in delaying cognitive losses. Another drug (memantine) may improve cognitive measures and overall functioning. In addition, some researchers (Langa, Foster, & Larson, 2004) have found some benefits of statin drugs, typically prescribed for cardiovascular patients, in slowing the dementia associated with Alzheimer's disease.

Behavioral approaches can be helpful for people with Alzheimer's disease. These approaches include sensory stimulation and reality orientation to help Alzheimer's patients retain their cognitive abilities. Several reviews (Hulme et al., 2010; O'Connor et al., 2009; Verkaik, Van Weert, & Francke, 2005) indicated that a few programs demonstrate effectiveness. Those that show the most promise are programs that provide pleasant stimulation, such as music, aromatherapy, exposure to sunlight, and muscle relaxation training, and programs that concentrate on cognitive skills and problem solving. Music therapy may be more useful than other types of sensory stimulation (Svansdottir & Snaedal, 2006) and is the approach that most consistently benefits Alzheimer's patients (Hulme et al., 2010; O'Connor et al., 2009; Verkaik et al., 2005). A meta-analysis of programs that provide cognitive stimulation indicates that such programs can provide modest improvements in cognitive skills, but programs that provide cognitive training provide fewer benefits (Huntley et al., 2015). However, caregivers can manage behavior problems of Alzheimer's patients through improvements in communication and modification of the environment to help decrease confusion and manage problem behaviors (O'Connor et al., 2009; Yuhas et al., 2006). For example, locking exit doors may prevent wandering. For those who get lost in their own homes, labeling the doors can be helpful.

Although none of these treatments can cure Alzheimer's disease, most will help control undesirable behaviors and alleviate some of the distressing symptoms of the disease. Any treatment that can delay symptoms of Alzheimer's disease can make a significant difference in the number of cases and in the costs of management (Haan & Wallace, 2004). In the early phases of Alzheimer's disease, both patients and

their families are distressed by its symptoms, but as the patient worsens and loses awareness, the stress of Alzheimer's becomes more severe for the family. The burden of caregiving is one factor in the decision to have a family member institutionalized (Mausbach et al., 2004), which adds to the cost of this disease.

Helping the Family

As with other chronic illnesses, Alzheimer's disease affects not only patients but also family members, who bear the burden of caregiving. Some of the distressing symptoms can make caregiving difficult; caring for a spouse or parent who may be abusive and no longer recognizes you is a very difficult task. Cognitive impairments lead to changes in behavior that may make the affected one no longer seem like the same person.

Caregiving affects families in industrialized and developing countries similarly: Caring for a family member with a dementing disease such as Alzheimer's creates a burden for families (Prince, 2004). This burden is emotional and practical. The problems of taking care of an Alzheimer's patient require time, demand new skills, and greatly disrupt family routine.

In the United States (Cancian & Olicker, 2000) and around the world (Prince, 2004), the caregiver role is occupied mostly by women. By some estimates, roughly two-thirds of Alzheimer's caregivers are women (Rabbarison et al., 2018). Unfortunately, the anger and suspiciousness that are common symptoms of Alzheimer's disease are more distressing to female than to male caregivers (Pillemer, Davis & Tremont, 2017), so that women tend to feel more burdened by providing care than men do. Their tasks may be burdensome indeed. A survey of Alzheimer's caregivers (Georges et al., 2008) indicated that these tasks may occupy more than 10 hours a day when the recipients of care are late-stage dementia patients.

The chronic stress of caregiving makes these family members of interest to psychoneuroimmunologists, who study how chronic stress affects the immune system. Janice Kiecolt-Glaser and her colleagues (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2002) have studied Alzheimer's caregivers and found that they experience poorer physical and psychological health and poorer immunological function than people of similar age who are not caregivers. Also, the level of impairment of the Alzheimer's patient is directly related to the level of distress in

the caregiver (Robinson-Whelen et al., 2001); that is, the more impaired the patient, the more distressed the caregiver. Furthermore, their distress does not decrease when their caregiving ends (Aneshensel, Botticello, & Yamamoto-Mitani, 2004). Thus, caregiving imposes severe burdens, extending even after the death of the Alzheimer's patient.

Caregivers now have more assistance available to them. For example, programs now exist to help people develop the skills they will need to be effective caregivers for someone with Alzheimer's disease (Paun et al., 2004). Caregivers do not feel so overwhelmed when they have the knowledge and skills to perform the necessary tasks. Reviews of such educational interventions (Beinart et al., 2012; Coon & Evans, 2009) indicate that this approach is successful in reducing stress and depression and improving self-efficacy and well-being. Support groups can also be sources of information about caring for patients and about community resources that provide respite care. Many support groups exist to provide information and emotional support for caregivers. In addition, the Internet can be a source of support. Online and telephone-based services provide support to caregivers who have difficulty obtaining assistance from other sources (Boots et al., 2014; Wilz, Schinkothe, & Soellner, 2011).

Alzheimer's caregivers frequently experience feelings of loss for the relationship that they once shared with the patient; these feelings of loss may begin with a partner's diagnosis (Robinson, Clare, & Evans, 2005). Making sense of dementia and adjusting to the loss is a strain for partner and family. However, only 19% of those caring for someone with Alzheimer's reported only strains (Sanders, 2005); most found positive aspects to their caregiving, such as feelings of mastery and personal and spiritual growth. In most ways, Nancy Reagan was more fortunate than the typical caregiver. She was able to hire others to help her provide care for her husband, but she and the Reagan family felt helpless and frustrated as they saw the former president progressively losing abilities (Ellis, 2004). Nancy said that she needed and appreciated the support of the many people who sent letters. Nancy's feelings of isolation and frustration were typical of caregivers for Alzheimer's patients, but Nancy and the Reagan family struggled to find meaning in their experience. One way that they did so was by becoming activists in the effort to find a cure or prevention for Alzheimer's disease.

IN SUMMARY

Alzheimer's disease is a progressive, degenerative disease of the brain that affects cognitive functioning, especially memory. Other symptoms include agitation and irritability, paranoia and other delusions, wandering, depression, and incontinence. These symptoms are also indicative of some psychiatric disorders, making Alzheimer's disease difficult to diagnose and distressing to both patients and caregivers.

Increasing age is a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease, with as many as half the people over 85 exhibiting symptoms. Both genetics and environment seem to play a role in development of the disease; both early- and late-onset varieties exist.

At this point, treatment is largely oriented toward slowing the progress of the disease, managing the negative symptoms, and helping family caregivers cope with the stress. Drug treatments intended to slow the progress of the disease have limited effectiveness but help some people. Management of symptoms can include providing sensory and cognitive stimulation to slow cognitive loss and changing the environment to make care less difficult. Training and support are also desirable for those who provide care to Alzheimer's patients because caregivers are burdened by the demands of caring for someone with this disease.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. What advice or support would you provide to someone who (1) has risk factors for Alzheimer's disease, (2) is living with Alzheimer's disease, and (3) is a caregiver for someone living with Alzheimer's disease?

11-3 Adjusting to Diabetes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 11-6** Understand the difference between type 1 and type 2 diabetes, in terms of risk factors, prevalence, and management of the illness
- 11-7** Identify the factors that relate to the management of diabetes, as well as interventions that can help

Like Nick Jonas, actress Halle Berry has a demanding career. In 1989, she had a role in a television sitcom and was working longer, harder hours than she ever had (Siegler, 2003). She had no opportunity to rest when she was tired or to eat a candy bar when she felt that her blood glucose level was low. Berry has **diabetes mellitus**, and her failure to take care of herself caused her to go into a coma that lasted seven days. Despite that terrifying experience, she saw it as a “wake-up call” that forced her to attend to her health. Now she is very careful about her diet, exercise, and stress, and she regulated her blood glucose level by taking insulin. In October 2007, Berry announced that she had cured herself of diabetes through a healthy diet and no longer took insulin (Goldman, 2007). Her remarks caused a furor, because Berry had been diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, for which there is no cure; if she no longer requires insulin injections, then her diabetes was really type 2 all along. Her diagnosis, behavior, and even her misunderstanding of her disease illustrate some of the many challenges presented by diabetes.

The Physiology of Diabetes

Before examining the psychological issues in the management of diabetes, let's look more closely at the physiology of the disorder. The **pancreas**, located below the stomach, produces different types of secretions. The **islet cells** of the pancreas produce several hormones, two of which, glucagon and insulin, are critically important in metabolism. **Glucagon** stimulates the release of glucose and therefore acts to elevate blood sugar levels. The action of **insulin** is the opposite. Insulin decreases the level of glucose in the blood by causing tissue cell membranes to open so glucose can enter the cells more freely. Disorders of the islet cells result in difficulties in sugar metabolism. Diabetes mellitus is a disorder caused by insulin deficiency. If the islet cells do not produce adequate insulin, sugar cannot move from the blood to the cells for use. Lack of insulin prevents the body from regulating blood sugar level. Excessive sugar accumulates in the blood and also appears in abnormally high levels in the urine. Both coma and death are possibilities for uncontrolled diabetes; Nick Jonas was close to a coma when he discovered his condition, and Halle Berry fell into a coma despite knowing of her condition.

The two types of diabetes mellitus are (1) insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM), also known as type 1 diabetes, and (2) non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM), also known as type 2



Actress Halle Berry has followed a diet and exercise regimen to control her diabetes and managed to have a healthy pregnancy.

diabetes. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that occurs when the person’s immune system attacks the insulin-making cells in the pancreas, destroying them (Permutt, Wasson, & Cox, 2005). This process usually occurs before age 30 and leaves the person without the capability to produce insulin and thus dependent on insulin injections. Type 1 diabetes was Halle Berry’s diagnosis when she fell into a coma; her age and symptoms were consistent with type 1 diabetes, but that diagnosis may have been incorrect. People with type 1 diabetes do not recover from this disease, and it is likely that her initial diagnosis was mistaken and that she always had type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes is the most common type of diabetes, representing over 90% of all diagnosed cases of diabetes (Xu et al., 2018). Until recently, type 2 diabetes was called *adult-onset diabetes* because it typically developed in people past the age of 30. However, type 2 diabetes increasingly appears among children and adolescents, accounting for over 20% of new diabetes cases among this age group (CDC, 2014b). This trend appears not only in the United States but also in developed countries throughout the world (Malecka-Tendera & Mazur, 2006). For both children and adults, type 2 diabetes affects ethnic minorities disproportionately, and those who develop this disease are often overweight, sedentary, and poor (Agardh et al., 2011; CDC, 2011a). The characteristics of both types of diabetes are shown in [Table 11.2](#). A third type of diabetes is *gestational diabetes*, which develops in some women during pregnancy. Gestational diabetes ends when the pregnancy is completed, but the disorder complicates

TABLE 11.2 Characteristics of Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus

Type 1	Type 2
Onset occurs before age 30	Onset may occur during childhood or adulthood
Patients are often normal weight or underweight	Patients are often overweight
Patients experience frequent thirst and urination	Patients may or may not experience frequent thirst and urination
Caused primarily by genetic factors	Caused by both lifestyle factors (poor diet, low physical activity, obesity) and genetic factors
Has no socioeconomic correlates	Affects more poor than middle-class people
Management involves insulin injections and dietary change	Management involves physical activity and dietary change, medication, and sometimes insulin injections
Carries risk of kidney damage	Carries risk of cardiovascular damage
Accounts for 5% of diabetics	Accounts for 90% to 95% of diabetics

pregnancy and presents a risk for the development of type 2 diabetes in the future (Reader, 2007).

The management of all types of diabetes requires lifestyle changes in order for the person to adjust to the disease and to minimize health complications. Diabetes requires daily monitoring of blood sugar levels and relatively strict compliance with both medical and lifestyle regimens to regulate blood sugar. Like other chronic diseases, diabetes can be controlled but not cured.

In addition to the danger of a coma, the inability to regulate blood sugar often causes people with diabetes to have a host of other health problems. Oral or injected insulin can control the most severe symptoms of insulin deficiency but does not mimic the normal production of insulin. People with diabetes still experience elevated levels of blood sugar, which may lead to the development of (1) damage to the blood vessels, leaving diabetics prone to cardiovascular disease (diabetics are twice as likely as other people to have hypertension and to develop heart disease); (2) damage to the retina, leaving diabetics at risk for blindness (diabetics are 17 times as likely to go blind as nondiabetics); and (3) kidney diseases, leaving diabetics prone to renal failure. In addition, diabetics, compared with nondiabetics, have double the risk of cancer of the pancreas (Huxley, Ansary-Moghaddam, de González, Barzi, & Woodward, 2005).

The Impact of Diabetes

The diagnosis of any chronic disease produces an impact on patients for two reasons: first, the emotional reaction to having a lifelong incurable disease, and second, the lifestyle adjustments required by the disease. For diabetes beginning during childhood, both children and their parents must come to terms with the child's loss of health (Lowes, Gregory, & Lyne, 2005) and the management of the disorder, which includes careful restrictions in diet, insulin injections, and recommendations for regular exercise. Dietary restrictions include careful scheduling of meals and snacks as well as adherence to a set of allowed and disallowed foods.

Diabetics must test their blood sugar levels at least once (and possibly several times) a day, drawing a blood sample and using the testing equipment correctly. The results guide diabetics to appropriate levels of insulin. Injections are the standard mode of administration for type 1 diabetics, and the daily (or more frequent) injections can be a source of fear and stress. Alternative modes of testing and insulin administration are desirable because drawing blood samples and

taking injections are painful, and diabetics tend to perform less testing and fewer injections than would be optimal in managing their blood sugar. For this reason, newer methods for testing include continuous glucose monitors, which transmit glucose levels wirelessly from sensors placed on the skin. These monitors are more convenient but not as accurate as finger-prick testing, so diabetics with these monitors still need to use finger-prick tests to verify some readings. Other modes of insulin administration exist, including external or implanted insulin pumps. Pumps are appropriate for some individuals, including children and adolescents, providing more stable blood glucose levels (Pickup & Renard, 2008). Although blood glucose testing and insulin administration are critically important, these aspects of diabetes care present difficulties for most diabetics.

Non-insulin-dependent (type 2) diabetes often does not require insulin injections, but this type of diabetes does require lifestyle changes and oral medication. African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans are at higher risk for type 2 diabetes than are European Americans (CDC, 2011a), and being overweight is a risk for all groups. Indeed, gaining weight increases and losing weight decreases the risk for type 2 diabetes (Black et al., 2005). Even bariatric surgery, a medical treatment for extreme obesity, resolves type 2 diabetes in a majority of diabetics who undergo the procedure (Buchwald et al., 2009). More frequently, the components of treatment for type 2 diabetes are behavioral methods for weight loss and a healthy diet.

Type 2 diabetics must deal with dietary restrictions and attend to their schedule of oral medication. Diabetes often affects sexual functioning in both men and women, and diabetic women who become pregnant often have problem pregnancies. Halle Berry announced that she was pregnant in 2007 (Bonilla, 2007). Although Halle Berry said that she felt some fear in connection with her pregnancy, she expressed a great deal of optimism and joy. Her fame and wealth allowed her to obtain excellent medical care, and her faithful adherence to her diabetes care helped minimize the potential complications; she gave birth to a healthy baby girl in 2008.

Type 2 diabetes is more likely to cause circulatory problems, leaving these individuals prone to cardiovascular problems, which is their leading cause of death. Both women (Hu et al., 2000) and men (Lotufo et al., 2001) with type 2 diabetes are at dramatically increased risk for death from all causes, but especially from cardiovascular disease.

Some diabetics deny the seriousness of their condition and ignore the need to restrict diet and take medication. Others acknowledge the seriousness of their problems but believe that the recommended regimen will be ineffective (Skinner, Hampson, & Fife-Schaw, 2002). Others become aggressive; they either direct their aggression outward and refuse to comply with their treatment regimen or turn their aggression inward and become depressed. Finally, many diabetics become dependent and rely on others to take care of them, thus taking no active part in their own care. All these reactions can interfere with the management of blood sugar levels and lead to serious health complications, including death.

Health Psychology's Involvement with Diabetes

Health psychologists seek to both research and treat diabetes (Gonder-Frederick, Cox, & Ritterband, 2002). Psychologist Richard Rubin became head of the American Diabetes Association in 2006, and he emphasized the role of psychology: "I want more and more people to understand that behavior and emotion play a part in diabetes and how that affects human and economic outcomes" (quoted in Dittmann, 2005, p. 35).

Researchers have concentrated on the effect of stress on glucose metabolism, the ways that diabetics understand and conceptualize their illness, the dynamics of families with diabetic children, and the factors that influence patient compliance with medical regimens. Health psychologists orient their efforts toward improving adherence to medical regimens so diabetics can control their blood glucose levels and minimize health complications.

Stress may play two roles in diabetes: as a possible cause of diabetes and as a factor in the regulation of blood sugar in diabetics. To examine the role of family stress in the development of diabetes, a team of researchers (Sepa et al., 2005) followed a large group of infants for the first year of their lives, measuring family stress and taking blood samples to test for signs of the autoimmune response that underlies type 1 diabetes. Indeed, stress predicted the development of this response. However, a prospective study with Native Americans (Daniels et al., 2006) found no relationship between stress during adulthood and subsequent development of type 2 diabetes.

Clearer evidence exists showing that stress affects glucose metabolism and control among diabetics. A meta-analytic review shows that having a stress-prone

personality and experiencing stressful events both predict poorer metabolic control (Chida & Hamer, 2008). A study of people with type 2 diabetes (Surwit et al., 2002) showed that adding a stress management component to diabetes education has a small but significant effect on blood sugar levels. Depression is another factor that affects diabetics and worsens blood glucose control (Lustman & Clouse, 2005). Thus, negative emotions can adversely affect diabetes, and interventions to manage stress and depression can be a worthwhile (and cost-effective) component for diabetes management programs.

Social support appears to be particularly important for metabolic control, as poor social support is the psychosocial factor most strongly tied to poor diabetes management (Chida & Hamer, 2008). Support from family and friends may promote greater glucose monitoring and physical activity, whereas support from health professionals may increase meal plan adherence (Khan et al., 2012; Rosland et al., 2008). Nick Jonas credits both his family and his relationship with health care providers as contributors to his success in managing his condition. Among Latinos with type 2 diabetes, the availability of support from sources such as family, friends, health care providers, and the community together predicted better illness management and lower depression (Fortmann, Gallo, & Philis-Tsimkias, 2011). However, support need not come from face-to-face contact with another person to be helpful. For example, several recent interventions use text messaging to provide supportive information to help patients' metabolic control. These interventions are generally effective, for both adolescents and adults (Krishna & Boren, 2008; Liang et al., 2011). For example, supportive text-messaging interventions have improved metabolic control among children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes in Scotland (Franklin et al., 2006) and Austria (Rami et al., 2006).

Health psychologists also research diabetic patients' understanding of their illness and how that understanding affects their behavior. Both patients and health care workers assume that patients understand the disease and recognize the symptoms of high and low blood glucose levels. These assumptions are not always true. For example, people's perception of the risk of developing diabetes is neither accurate nor based on their existing risk factors, even for physicians (Walker et al., 2003). Rather, having a close friend or family member with diabetes was a circumstance that raised the perception of vulnerability (Montgomery et al., 2003).

Perceptions also affect how people with diabetes care for themselves. Their conceptualizations of diabetes affect their coping behavior (Searle et al., 2007). For example, belief in the consequences of diabetes predicted the use of problem-focused coping strategies, and those who believed they were able to control their diabetes were more likely to use their medication.

Inaccurate beliefs can have a significant impact on self-care. In a study of the interrelationships among beliefs, personality characteristics, and self-care behavior among diabetics (Skinner et al., 2002), beliefs emerged as the most important component. The perceived effectiveness of the treatment regimen predicted all aspects of diabetes self-care. This finding emphasizes the importance of diabetes education in building adherence to the diet, exercise, and medication regimen that is necessary to control blood glucose levels.

Complete adherence to the medication and lifestyle regimen is rare (Cramer, 2004). As Chapter 4 explored, a number of factors relate to poor adherence, and diabetes combines several of these factors. First, complexity makes adherence more difficult, and second, making lifestyle changes is more difficult than taking medication. Diabetics must do both. Third, they must also perform blood sugar testing several times a day, even when they feel well. Fourth, their adherence will not cure the disease, and serious complications may be years away. Thus, poor adherence is common, and improving adherence is of primary concern to psychologists involved in providing care for diabetics.

The role of health psychology in diabetes management is likely to expand because behavioral components are important in controlling blood glucose levels. Indeed, lifestyle changes can prevent the development of diabetes in individuals who exhibit blood glucose tolerance problems (Gillies et al., 2007). For example, a lifestyle intervention conducted in China (Li et al., 2008) showed a remarkable reduction in long-term incidence of type 2 diabetes. Diabetic adults who participated in a 6-year, group-based diet and exercise intervention reported significantly lower incidence of diabetes during the course of the intervention, as well as at a 20-year follow-up. Similar success of lifestyle intervention has been shown in the United States as well (Diabetes Prevention Program Research Group, 2009). A behavioral component can add to the effectiveness of educational programs for diabetic patients. Education alone is not adequate in helping diabetics follow their regimen (Rutten, 2005; Savage et al., 2010). Because situational factors such as stress and

social pressure to eat the wrong foods affect adherence, programs with a behavioral skills training component might be a valuable addition to diabetes management training. A program that fostered feelings of control (Macrodimitris & Endler, 2001) improved diabetics' adherence to diet, exercise, and blood glucose testing, and another program (Rosal et al., 2005) used a cognitive behavioral framework to increase self-management skills in low-income, Spanish-speaking diabetics. In sum, psychosocial interventions show promise in helping diabetics stick to their management regimen (Savage et al., 2010).

IN SUMMARY

Diabetes mellitus is a chronic disease that results from failure of the islet cells of the pancreas to manufacture sufficient insulin, affecting blood glucose levels and producing effects in many organ systems. Type 1 diabetes is an autoimmune disease that typically appears during childhood; type 2 diabetes also affects children but is more typical of people over age 30. People with diabetes must maintain a strict regimen of diet, exercise, and insulin supplements to avoid the serious cardiovascular, neurological, and renal complications of the disorder.

As with other chronic diseases, a diagnosis of diabetes mellitus produces distress for both patients and their families. Health psychologists study adjustment to the disorder and compliance with the necessary lifestyle changes. Few people with diabetes adhere to all aspects of blood glucose testing, medication, diet, and exercise that minimize the risks of health complications. Skills-training programs show some success in helping diabetics manage their disorder, but health care professionals need to find ways to encourage the development of responsibility and self-management to put diabetics in charge of their own health.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. What advice or support would you offer to someone who is living with diabetes that could help them better manage their illness?

11-4 The Impact of Asthma

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 11-8** Understand the symptoms of asthma, as well as the risk factors that put a person at risk for the development of asthma as well as an asthma attack
- 11-9** Identify the factors that relate to the management of asthma, as well as interventions that can help people who live with asthma

Seeing David Beckham out of breath is not unusual. The international star of soccer, a sport that requires remarkable aerobic fitness, is renowned for his two-decade-long career that includes the most World Cup appearances for any player on the English national team.

In 2009, a photographer caught David Beckham out of breath on the sidelines of a soccer field, but this time it *was* unusual. David Beckham was using an asthma inhaler. Until that day, the sports world did not realize that David Beckham suffered from asthma, as he had since he was a small boy. After this photograph surfaced to the public, Beckham revealed that he takes medicine regularly to control his condition. Despite the challenges that any person with asthma faces, David Beckham remains optimistic about his health, saying, “I’ve played 65 games a season for the last 20 years, so it doesn’t affect the future” (*Daily Mail*, 2009).

Worldwide, the prevalence of asthma varies considerably across countries, with Australia, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands having the greatest prevalence of this condition, at greater than 15% of the populations reporting asthma (To et al., 2012). In the United States, the number of people with asthma increased between 2000 and 2010 (Moorman et al., 2012). About 26 million people in the United States have asthma (7.7%), and nearly 30% of these cases occur in children and adolescents. For all age groups, the rates are higher for African Americans than for other ethnic groups. The death rate from asthma is not high, and that mortality rate has decreased in recent years, but asthma is the largest cause of disability among children and the leading cause of missed school days, making it a serious health problem in the United States.



David Beckham coped with asthma throughout his life and soccer career.

The Disease of Asthma

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory disease that causes constriction of the bronchial tubes, preventing air from passing freely. People experiencing an asthma attack will wheeze, cough, and have trouble breathing; such an attack can be fatal. At other times they appear to be fine, but the underlying inflammation remains (Cohn, Elias, & Chupp, 2004).

Asthma shares some features with chronic obstructive lung diseases (COLDs) such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema, but asthma also differs in some ways (Barnes, 2008). All of these conditions involve inflammation, though not to the same extent or through the same immune system mechanisms. But the most important difference is that people with COLD experience constant problems, whereas people with asthma may go for long periods of time without any problems in breathing.

The cause of asthma is not understood. Indeed, asthma may not be one disease but rather a number of diseases that share symptoms yet have differences in underlying pathologies (Wenzel, 2006). Until recently, experts believed that asthma was an allergic reaction to substances in the environment, but several newer explanations involve more complex reactions of the immune system (Cohn et al., 2004; Renz et al., 2006). One view holds that a genetic vulnerability makes some infants' immune systems respond with an allergic reaction to substances in the environment that other infants' immune systems encounter without problems. This *diathesis-stress model* is a variation on the traditional view that asthma is an allergic reaction triggered by environmental allergens. These allergens include an assortment of common substances such as tobacco smoke, household dust (along with dust mites), cockroaches, animal dander, and environmental pollutants. People with the vulnerability who are exposed to the substance to which they are sensitive develop asthma; those who are not exposed fail to develop asthma or show such mild symptoms that they are not diagnosed.

Another view, called the *hygiene hypothesis*, holds that asthma is a result of the cleanliness that has become common in modern societies (von Hertzen & Haahtela, 2004). Infants have undeveloped immune systems, and in hygienic environments they encounter too little dirt and too few bacteria, leaving their immune systems underprepared to deal with these substances. Exposure then leads to overresponsiveness, which produces inflammation; this inflammation forms the basis for asthma. Support for this hypothesis comes from studies of children in rural Central Europe (Ege et al., 2011). Children who grew up on farms had greater exposure to bacteria and fungi than children who did not grow up on farms. Consistent with the hygiene hypothesis, greater exposure to microbes related to decreased risk of asthma. A refinement of the hygiene hypothesis (Martinez, 2001) combines elements of genetic vulnerability and early exposure to substances in the environment that influence immune system development to either sensitize or protect children from asthma and allergic conditions.

As the hygiene hypothesis suggests, asthma is more common in developed countries that emphasize cleanliness and a hygienic environment for infants. For example, asthma is less common in rural China than in the United States, Sweden, Australia, and New Zealand (von Hertzen & Haahtela, 2004). However, within the United States, asthma is more common in the urban inner city,

where air pollution is more common, and high levels of air pollution increase the risk of developing asthma (Islam et al., 2007). In addition, asthma varies with ethnicity, and African Americans are more vulnerable than people from other ethnic groups (American Lung Association, 2007).

Other risk factors for asthma include sedentary lifestyle and obesity (Gold & Wright, 2005). People take few deep breaths when they are sedentary, which may be the link between lack of exercise and asthma. In addition, staying indoors exposes people to some of the allergens that provoke asthma attacks. The link between asthma and obesity is significant: Obese people are two to three times more likely to have asthma than non-obese people. Psychological factors also show a relationship with the development of asthma (Chida, Hamer, & Steptoe, 2008), serving as predictors of its development and appearing as a result of living with the disease. Depression is a specific psychological factor that relates to asthma (Strine et al., 2008). Although the factors related to the development of asthma are complex and not completely understood, the triggers for attacks are better known.

Triggers are substances or circumstances that cause the development of symptoms, provoking the narrowing of the airways that causes difficulty in breathing. The substances include allergens such as mold, pollen, dust and dust mites, cockroaches, and animal dander; infections of the respiratory tract; tobacco or wood smoke; and irritants such as air pollutants, chemical sprays, or other environmental pollution (Harder, 2004). The circumstances include exercise and emotional reactions such as stress or fear. Any of these substances and experiences may provoke an attack, but most people with asthma are sensitive to only a few. Identifying an individual's triggers is part of managing asthma.

Managing Asthma

Managing asthma shows some similarities (and similar problems) to managing diabetes. Both disorders require frequent contact with the health care system, can be life-threatening, affect children and adolescents, impose restrictions on lifestyle, and pose substantial adherence problems (Elliott, 2006). People with diabetes may manage their blood sugar levels so that they have no symptoms, but even with careful management, people with asthma have attacks. The underlying inflammation of the bronchial tract is always present, but a person with asthma may go for weeks or months

without an attack. Minimizing attacks is the primary goal of managing asthma. Daily attention to symptoms and status improves the chances of avoiding attacks, and behaviors are critical.

Managing asthma requires a variety of medications as well as learning personal triggers and avoiding them (Courtney, McCarter, & Pollart, 2005). To decrease the chances of an attack, people with asthma must take medication, which is usually an anti-inflammatory corticosteroid or some other medication that decreases the respiratory inflammation that underlies asthma. These drugs require daily attention and have unpleasant side effects, such as weight gain and lack of energy. The schedule may be very complicated, and as Chapter 4 detailed, complexity decreases compliance with medical regimens. The side effects also contribute to problems in adherence. Thus, adherence to their preventive medication is a major problem for people with asthma, especially for children and adolescents (Asthma Action America, 2004; Elliott, 2006).

When people with asthma have an attack, they have trouble breathing or cannot breathe. Gasping for breath, they either use a bronchodilator to inhale medication that relieves the symptoms or go to a hospital emergency room for treatment (Asthma Action America, 2004). If used improperly, bronchodilators produce a type of “high,” and asthma experts believe that most people with asthma rely on bronchodilators too much and on preventive medication too little. By some estimates, nearly 70% of people with asthma use their inhalers improperly, decreasing the effectiveness of this important device (Román-Rodríguez et al., 2019). Relying on emergency rooms for managing asthma is an expensive choice and contributes to rising medical costs.

A large-scale survey (Asthma Action America, 2004) revealed widespread misunderstandings and misperceptions concerning asthma among parents and other caregivers. Misunderstandings included what underlies the condition and what constitutes adequate management; misperceptions included the frequency of children’s symptoms. People with asthma also hold incorrect beliefs about the disease (Elliott, 2006). For example, they may believe that asthma is not a serious disease or that it is an intermittent disease that does not require daily care. All of these misperceptions may affect appropriate care.

Boosting self-care and increasing adherence to medication regimens are major goals for improving asthma care. A number of interventions have targeted these goals, with some success. Many of these

interventions have been oriented toward education for people with asthma, assuming that when people understand the severity of the disease and the steps that are necessary to manage it, they will adhere. Research does not support those assumptions; interventions that are basically educational may increase knowledge but are not very successful in changing behavior (Bussey-Smith & Rossen, 2007; Coffman, Cabana, Halpin, & Yelin, 2008). Interventions with a behavioral component, such as developing self-care (Guevara, Wolf, Grum, & Clark, 2003) or an action plan (Pinnock et al., 2017), tend to be more successful. Digital interventions—such as personalized text messages, smartphone apps, and websites—that include a behavioral component are also effective in improving adherence among children and adolescent (Ramsey et al., 2020). Adhering to the medication and behavioral regimen to control this disorder is a challenge for people with asthma, but behavioral interventions represent a promising strategy for helping them take their medication and avoid situations that precipitate attacks.

IN SUMMARY

Asthma is a chronic disease that involves inflammation of the bronchial tubes, which leads to difficulties in breathing. Substances such as smoke or allergens and situations such as fear can trigger attacks that have symptoms of coughing, wheezing, and choking. The cause for the inflammation underlying asthma remains unknown, but theories include a genetic component and an overreaction of the immune system that occurs in hygienic environments.

Asthma usually develops during childhood, and children and adolescents experience problems in coping with their disease. People with asthma need to take medication to decrease the chances of attacks and identify their triggers so as to avoid them. The complex schedule of medications and their unpleasant side effects contribute to adherence problems. A major goal of treatment is to help people with asthma take medication to prevent attacks rather than rely on inhaled medications to stop symptoms or use hospital emergency room assistance. Behavioral strategies to increase compliance and self-management skills have shown some success.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. What advice or support would you provide to someone living with asthma, so they can better manage their illness?

11-5 Dealing with HIV and AIDS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 11-10** Understand the symptoms and physiology of HIV and AIDS, as well as the major routes of infection
- 11-11** Identify the role that psychologists play in both the primary and secondary prevention of HIV and AIDS, and interventions that help people living with HIV and AIDS

Earvin “Magic” Johnson was the best basketball player in the world when he retired in 1991 (Beacham, 2011). That retirement came as a surprise, but his announcement that he was human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) positive was more so. Johnson learned of his HIV infection through a routine physical examination. Until that announcement, most people considered HIV infection to be a disease of gay European Americans, and Johnson was neither. Johnson’s openness about his HIV status helped to change public opinion about this disease, and his celebrity status enabled him to raise money for HIV research and education. More than 25 years after his diagnosis, Johnson remains healthy and is an advocate for increasing minority participation in clinical trials. He attributes his continued health to someone who participated in a clinical trial for the many drugs developed to treat HIV infection (Gambrill, 2008).

AIDS is a disorder in which the immune system loses its effectiveness, leaving the body defenseless against bacterial, viral, fungal, parasitic, cancerous, and other opportunistic diseases. Without the immune system, the body cannot protect itself against the many organisms that can invade it and cause damage. (For a more complete discussion of the immune system and its function, see Chapter 6.) The danger from AIDS comes

from the opportunistic infections that start when the immune system no longer functions effectively. In this way, AIDS is similar to the immune deficiency in children who have been born without immune system organs and are susceptible to a variety of infections.

AIDS is the result of exposure to a contagious virus, the **human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)**. So far, researchers have discovered two variants of the human immunodeficiency virus: HIV-1, which causes most AIDS cases in the United States, and HIV-2, which is responsible for most AIDS cases in Africa, although some HIV-2 cases have appeared in the United States. The progression from HIV infection to AIDS varies, and people such as Magic Johnson who are HIV positive may remain free of AIDS symptoms for many years.

Incidence and Mortality Rates for HIV/AIDS

AIDS is a relatively new disease, first recognized in 1981 and identified in 1983. The disease originated in Africa in a virus that affects monkeys (Moore, 2004). Nobody knows how and when the virus came to infect humans. The first confirmed case of AIDS appeared in the Congo in 1959, but the disease was very limited. During the 1960s, the disease spread to Haiti and from there to other places in North America and the world (Gilbert et al., 2007). Both the number of new cases and the number of deaths from AIDS spread during the 1980s.

Since 2005, death rates from AIDS declined sharply worldwide (UNAIDS, 2016). Despite these improvements, AIDS remains among the leading causes of death in the world and the leading cause of death in Africa. According to one estimate (Lamprey, 2002), AIDS is the deadliest plague in history. In 2019, over 38 million people were living with HIV; when those people die, HIV will surpass the number of people killed by the bubonic plague in the 14th century. About 1.7 million people acquired HIV in 2019, which represents a decline in the rate of infection but also poses a number that extends this plague (UNAIDS, 2020). No effective vaccine yet exists (Callaway, 2011), but drugs now extend the lives of people who are infected (UNAIDS, 2020).

In 1992, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 1992) revised its definition of HIV infection so that incidence figures from 1992 and subsequent years are not directly comparable to earlier figures. The number of cases in 1992 appears to rise sharply (see **Figure 11.1**), but this count includes a large backlog of people who in previous years would not have been

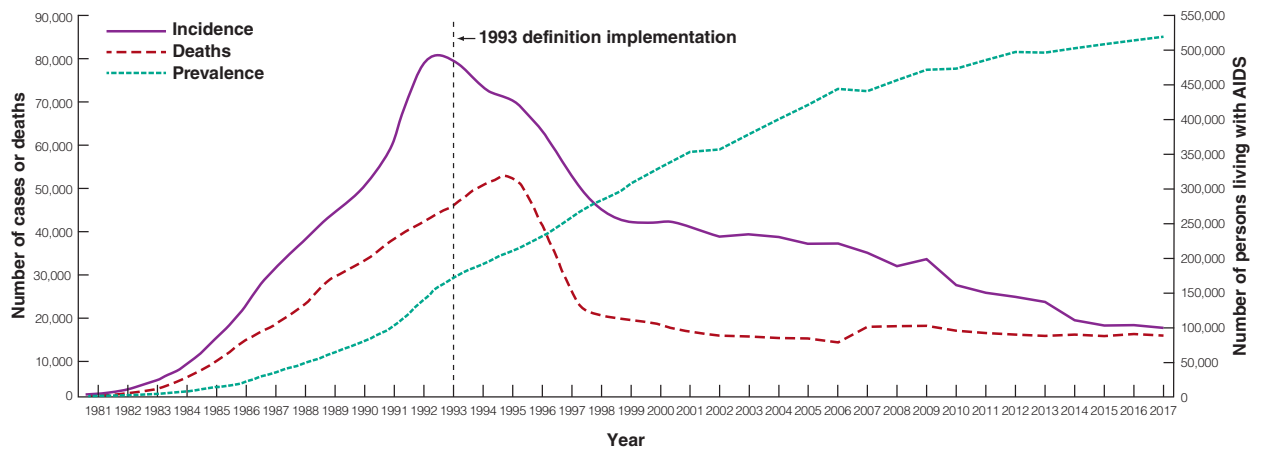


FIGURE 11.1 Incidence, prevalence, and deaths from AIDS cases by year, United States, 1981 to 2017.

Source: “Update, AIDS—United States, 2000,” by R. M. Klevens & J. J. Neal, 2002, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, vol. 51, no. 27, p. 593; *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, 2002, by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2004, vol. 14; *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, 2006, by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2008, vol. 18; *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, 201, by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012, vol. 22; Source: *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report*, 2018, by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019, vol. 30.

classified as having AIDS. As Figure 11.1 shows, AIDS cases reported each year (incidence) began a steady decline after 1992.

Despite these declines, HIV and AIDS disproportionately affect minority ethnic groups in the United States, especially by the epidemics affecting heterosexuals and injection drug users. African Americans are the largest segment of the U.S. population with HIV. Although African Americans represent only 14% of the U.S. population, they account for 44% of all new HIV infections (CDC, 2016b). This ethnic disparity is particularly strong among women, with 62% of new diagnoses among women in 2014 occurring in African American women (CDC, 2016b). Hispanic Americans are also disproportionately affected by HIV, with a 2013 new infection rate nearly three times as high as that of European Americans; this disparity is present mainly among men. **Figure 11.2** shows the percentages of men and women of different ethnic backgrounds infected with HIV.

Age is also a factor in HIV infection. Young adults are more likely to acquire an HIV infection than other age groups, largely due to their risky behaviors, lack of information about HIV, and lack of power to protect themselves from unsafe sex (Mantell, Stein, & Susser, 2008). For example, in the United States, more than one in five of all new HIV infections are among adolescents and young adults aged 13 to 24 (CDC, 2016b). Recent analyses indicate that this situation is improving, at least in Africa. People over age 50 are less likely to acquire an

infection than younger adults, but when infected, they tend to develop AIDS more rapidly and to get more opportunistic infections (CDC, 2008).

Incidence of HIV infection increased rapidly in the United States from 1981 to 1995 and then began to decrease (Torian et al., 2011). Mortality from AIDS dropped even more. Between 1993 and 1998, AIDS diagnoses decreased by 45%, but AIDS deaths decreased by 63%. One reason for the decline of the number of deaths from AIDS is that HIV-infected individuals now live longer. People diagnosed with AIDS in 1984 had an average survival time of 11 months (Lee, Karon, Selik, Neal, & Fleming, 2001), but more effective treatment lengthened the life expectancy of individuals who are HIV positive. Magic Johnson is an example of this increased life expectancy; Johnson has lived nearly 30 years since his diagnosis.

The number of people living with AIDS (prevalence) continues to increase, as Figure 11.1 shows, but combinations of antiretroviral drugs have changed the course of HIV infection, drastically slowing the progression of infection and prolonging lives (UNAIDS, 2010). This increased survival time is a result of more effective drug therapies, early detection, and lifestyle changes. Giving up unhealthy habits such as smoking, drinking alcohol, and taking illicit drugs; becoming more vigilant about their health; and exercising more control over their treatment can help infected persons live longer and healthier lives (Chou et al., 2004). An optimistic attitude also contributes to longevity (Moskowitz, 2003).

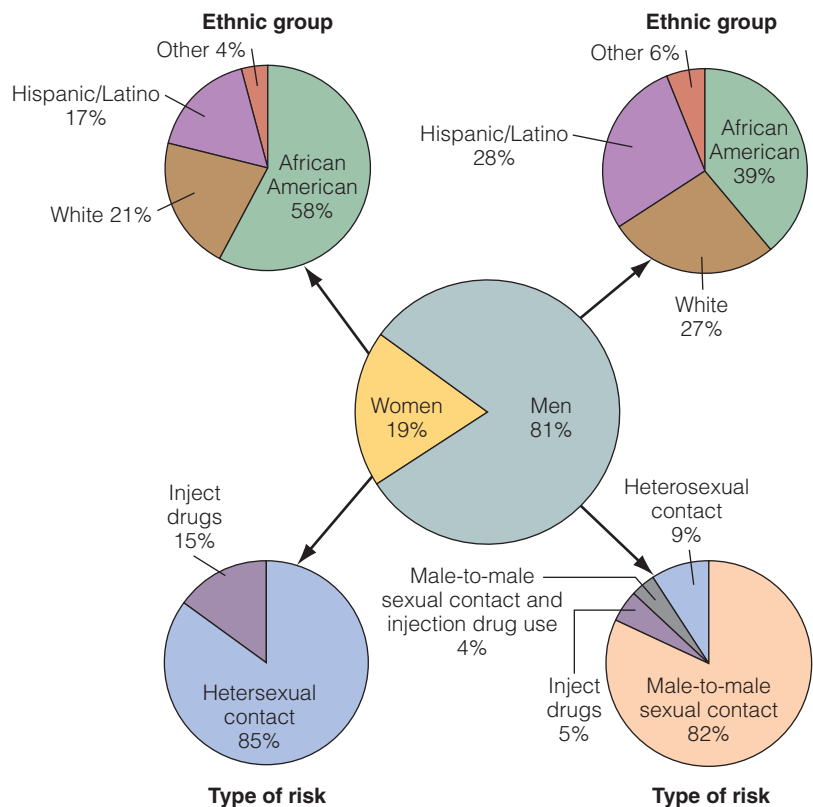


FIGURE 11.2 HIV infection for women and men, by ethnic group and type of risk.
Source: *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, 2018*, by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019, vol. 30 (Tables 1a and 5a).

Symptoms of HIV and AIDS

Typically, HIV progresses over a decade or more from infection to AIDS, but the progression varies. During the first phase of HIV infection, symptoms are not easily distinguishable from those of other diseases. Within a week or so of infection, people may (or may not) experience symptoms consisting of fever, sore throat, skin rash, headache, and other symptoms that resemble the flu (Cibulka, 2006). This phase lasts from a few days to four weeks, followed typically by a period that may last as long as 10 years, during which infected people are asymptomatic or experience only minimal symptoms. During this time, the immune systems of infected people gradually become destroyed, even though the infected individuals may remain unaware of their HIV status.

People who go untreated usually progress to symptoms, which is the beginning of HIV disease (Cibulka, 2006). Early symptomatic HIV disease occurs when a

person’s CD4 T-lymphocyte cell count drops and the person’s immune system becomes less able to fight infections. When the CD4 count falls to 200 or less per cubic millimeter of blood (healthy people have a CD4 count of 1,000), the person has AIDS. As their immune system loses its defensive capacities, people with early symptomatic HIV disease become susceptible to various opportunistic infections that a healthy immune system would resist. They may experience weight loss, persistent diarrhea, white spots in the mouth, painful skin rash, fever, and persistent fatigue.

As the supply of CD4 T-lymphocytes depletes, the immune system loses an important mechanism for fighting infections within cells. The diseases associated with HIV are caused by a variety of agents, including viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites. The HIV virus damages or kills the part of the immune system that fights *viral* infections, leaving no way for the body to fight HIV. But HIV does not destroy the antibodies that

the immune system has already manufactured, so the immune system response that occurs through antibodies circulating in the blood remains intact. Therefore, HIV disease does not often cause a person to develop, for example, infections with the bacterium that causes strep throat or the virus that causes influenza. Most HIV-infected people have antibodies to fight against these common agents.

As their CD4 count falls to the level defining AIDS, people are subject to lung, gastrointestinal, nervous system, liver, bone, and brain damage from infections from otherwise rare organisms, which leads to diseases such as *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, Kaposi's sarcoma, tuberculosis, and toxoplasmic encephalitis. Symptoms include greater weight loss, general fatigue, fever, shortness of breath, dry cough, purplish bumps on the skin, and AIDS-related dementia.

The Transmission of HIV

Although HIV is an infectious organism with a high fatality rate, the virus is not easily transmitted from person to person. The main routes of infection are from person to person during sex, from direct contact with blood or blood products, and from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding (UNAIDS, 2007). Concentrations of HIV are especially high in the semen and blood of infected people. Therefore, contact with infected semen or blood is a risk. Other body fluids do not contain such a high concentration of HIV, making contact with saliva, urine, or tears much less of a risk. No evidence exists that any sort of casual contact spreads the infection. Eating with the same utensils or plates or drinking from the same cup as someone who is infected does not transmit HIV, neither does touching or even kissing someone who is infected. Insect bites do not spread the virus, and even being bitten by someone who is infected is not likely to infect the person who is bitten.

People most at risk for HIV infection are those affected by causes of the four epidemics: male–male sexual contact, injection drug use, heterosexual contact, and transmission from mother to baby. Each of the groups reflected by these four epidemics experiences somewhat different risks.

Male–Male Sexual Contact In the early years of AIDS, men who had sex with men made up the majority of AIDS cases in North America and Western Europe. Male–male sexual contact is still the leading

source of HIV infection in the United States. This mode of transmission declined during the 1990s but has increased slightly during the past few years; it now accounts for more than half of HIV transmissions in the United States (CDC, 2020).

Among gay and bisexual men, unprotected anal intercourse is an especially risky behavior, particularly for the receptive partner. Anal intercourse can easily damage the delicate lining of the rectum, so the receptive person is at high risk if his partner is infected with HIV. The damaged rectum makes an excellent route for the virus to enter the body, and infected semen has a high concentration of HIV. Unprotected oral sex with an infected partner is also a risky practice because HIV can enter the body through any tiny cut or other lesion in the mouth.

Condom use became common among gay men, but as treatment became more effective, gay men became less concerned with contracting HIV (Kalichman et al., 2007), and a subculture of gay men is attracted to unprotected anal intercourse, despite their knowledge of its dangers (Shernoff, 2006). Using alcohol or other drugs contributes to the decision to have unprotected sex (Celentano et al., 2006). In addition, the Internet is one meeting place for men who want to have casual sex with other men, and these encounters have been less likely to include condoms than other types of meetings (Garofalo et al., 2007). More recently, smartphone apps facilitate such meetings between men, and recent studies suggest that the use of these apps does not increase the likelihood of unprotected sex (Whitfield et al., 2017). Despite this, risky sexual behaviors continue to put men who have sex with men in danger of HIV exposure.

Injection Drug Use Another high-risk behavior is the sharing of unsterilized needles by injection drug users, a practice that allows the direct transmission of blood from one person to another. Injection drug use is the third most frequent source of HIV infection in the United States (CDC, 2020). However, in other parts of the world—such as Asia, Thailand, Pakistan, and India—injection drug use fuels the HIV epidemic (UNAIDS, 2010). Some injection drug users engage in this behavior in certain situations—for example, when intoxicated or when there is no immediate access to sterile drug equipment. Some evidence (Heimer, 2008) indicates that relatively small-scale needle exchange programs can be effective in controlling HIV infection in a variety of communities.

Transmission through injection drug use accounts for a greater percentage of infected African Americans and Hispanic Americans than European Americans (CDC, 2008). Also, a higher percentage of infected women than men are exposed to the virus through this route. Several behavioral factors relate to HIV infection for women who inject drugs, including the number of sex partners and whether they have traded sex for money or drugs. These behaviors increase the chances for transmission through heterosexual sex.

Heterosexual Contact Heterosexual contact is the leading source of HIV infection in Africa (UNAIDS, 2007) and the second-leading source of HIV infection in the United States, accounting for approximately 25% of new cases in the United States (CDC, 2020). African Americans and Hispanic Americans are disproportionately represented among those infected through heterosexual contact, and women from these two ethnic backgrounds are in greater danger than men from heterosexual contact.

This gender asymmetry comes from ease of transmission during sexual intercourse. Although men are susceptible to HIV through sexual contact with women, male-to-female transmission is eight times more likely than female-to-male transmission. Despite women's greater likelihood of infection through heterosexual sex, they tend to see their sexual partners as safer than men do (Crowell & Emmers-Sommers, 2001).

Trust and confidence in one's partner in a heterosexual relationship may be unfounded and result in HIV infection. One study (Crowell & Emmers-Sommers, 2001) questioned HIV-positive individuals and found many that reported a high level of trust in their past sexual partners. Another study (Klein, Elifson, & Sterk, 2003) found that women who perceived themselves to be at some risk behaved in ways that raised their risks, but half of women who felt no risk still engaged in at least some risky behaviors. Thus, people's overly trusting view of partners and failure to accept the possibility of risks lead to unprotected sex. Regular use of condoms may provide a high level of safety for heterosexual men and women, but many young heterosexual couples use condoms more as a means of preventing pregnancy than of preventing HIV (Bird et al., 2000).

Transmission During the Birth Process Another group at risk for HIV infection is children born to HIV-positive women. This transmission tends to occur during the birth process. Breastfeeding can also transmit the virus (Steinbrook, 2004). Children infected with HIV during the birth process suffer from a variety of

developmental disabilities, including intellectual and academic impairment, psychomotor dysfunction, and emotional and behavioral difficulties (Mitchell, 2001). In addition, many of these children are born to mothers who ingested drugs during pregnancy and thus are put at further risk for developmental difficulties.

Most individuals who are HIV positive are within their reproductive years, and knowledge of HIV-positive status does not necessarily deter people from reproduction (Delvaux & Nostlinger, 2007). Both HIV-positive women and men may wish to have children, and the family traditions of some Asian cultures push couples toward decisions to reproduce (Ko & Muecke, 2005). With people who are HIV positive, reproduction is a risk for the child. Semen carries HIV that can transmit to the fetus, and transmission during the birth process is likely unless the HIV-positive mother undergoes antiretroviral therapy. Therefore, seeking prenatal counseling and care is critically important for HIV-positive women and men who wish to start a pregnancy. Early prenatal care can reduce the risk of transmission from mother to child to about 1%.

Psychologists' Role in the HIV Epidemic

From the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, psychologists have played an important role in combating the spread of infection (Kelly & Kalichman, 2002). During the early years of the epidemic, psychologists contributed to both primary and secondary prevention efforts. Primary prevention includes changing behavior to decrease HIV transmission. Secondary prevention includes helping people who are HIV positive to live with the infection, counseling people about HIV testing, helping patients deal with social and interpersonal aspects of the disease, and helping patients adhere to their complex treatment program. Much of the improvement in length of survival of HIV-infected patients rests with the effectiveness of drug treatments, highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART). This treatment consists of a combination of pills that must be taken on a strict schedule, making adherence a challenge. Psychologists' knowledge concerning adherence to medical regimens is now relevant to managing HIV infection.

Encouraging Protective Measures Except for infants born to HIV-infected mothers, most people have some control in protecting themselves from the human immunodeficiency virus. Fortunately, HIV is not easily transmitted from person to person, making casual

contact with infected persons a low risk. Health care workers who participate in surgery, emergency care, or other procedures that bring them into contact with blood should be careful to prevent infected blood from entering their body through an open wound. For example, dentists and dental hygienists wear protective gloves, and health care workers should adhere to a set of standard protective measures.

Although some risks are specific to certain professions, most people infected with HIV acquired the virus through sexual behavior or by sharing contaminated needles. People can protect themselves against HIV infection by changing those behaviors that are high risks for acquiring the infection—namely, having unprotected sexual contact or sharing needles with an infected person. Limiting the number of sex partners, using condoms, and avoiding shared needles are three behaviors that will protect the largest number of people from HIV infection. However, for people who engage in these risky behaviors, they are very difficult to change. A variety of factors contribute to this difficulty.

One factor that makes behavior change difficult is perception of risk. Most people in the United States do not perceive that they are at risk for HIV infection, and they are correct (Holtzman et al., 2001). That is, most adults do not engage in the behaviors that are primary HIV risks. However, some people are at risk and fail to perceive that risk accurately. For example, young men who have sex with men reported overly optimistic beliefs about their risk (MacKellar et al., 2007), as did college students in Nigeria (Ijadunola et al., 2007). Their

misperceptions play a role in their continued risky behavior, and culture is an important influence in sexual risk behaviors.

Cultures in which male dominance is supported by social custom or religion and in which women have little access to economic resources also have high rates of heterosexually transmitted HIV, such as countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America (UNAIDS, 2007). When women are financially dependent on men and have limited access to economic resources, they may have little control over sexual encounters or even be vulnerable to forced or coerced sex. Thus, they may be unable to negotiate condom use, which increases their risk for infection. These dangers also apply to women in the United States. A study of HIV-positive African American women (Lichtenstein, 2005) confirmed the presence of abuse and dominance as factors in these women's HIV infection, and a large study of young adults found that alcohol use and violence contribute to HIV transmission (Collins, Orlando, & Klein, 2005).

Helping People with HIV Infection People who believe they may be infected with HIV, as well as those who know that they are, can benefit from various psychological interventions. People who engage in high-risk behaviors may have difficulty deciding whether to be tested for HIV, and psychologists can provide both information and support for these people. Nearly one-third of adults at high risk for HIV have never been tested (Pitasi et al., 2019), including (1) a significant



Rob Crandall/Alamy Stock Photo

Psychologists have been involved in primary prevention for HIV infection, such as promoting condom use.

minority of gay and bisexual men, (2) a significant minority of injection drug users, and (3) a larger proportion of heterosexual men and women with multiple partners and inconsistent use of condoms (Awad et al., 2004). Indeed, many people who are HIV positive have not been tested and thus do not know their HIV status.

The decision to get an HIV test has both benefits and costs to the individual, but testing is considered essential to the control of HIV infection (Janssen et al., 2003). Far too many people undergo testing after their disease progresses and treatment options are less effective; a prominent part of Magic Johnson's campaign targets early testing and services for people whose tests indicate infection. Early testing for those who are HIV positive allows early treatment, which will prolong their lives and will permit them to find ways to reduce or eliminate behaviors that place others at risk.

The costs of being tested include all the problems of arranging a health care visit, plus the distress that comes with the potential for bad news. Currently, HIV testing is not part of routine health examinations, and individuals must seek testing (Clark, 2006). At least 25% of those with HIV infection are unaware of their status because they have not sought testing. In addition, many people who agree to testing never take steps to learn the results. Alternatives to the standard testing procedure, such as rapid results testing and at-home testing, increase the likelihood of learning one's HIV status (Hutchinson et al., 2006).

Learning of HIV-positive status is a traumatic event that can lead to anxiety, depression, anger, and distress. The ongoing experience of coping with HIV likewise can lead to these emotional responses, which have clear implications for disease progression. A review of over 30 prospective studies of people living with HIV concluded that emotional distress predicts a variety of indicators of HIV disease progression, including lower levels of CD4 cells, AIDS symptoms and diagnosis, and even mortality due to AIDS (Chida & Vedhara, 2009). People's coping styles also relate to adjustment and disease progression. For example, people who take direct action to cope, maintain a positive outlook, and express emotions tend to have better physical health (Moskowitz et al., 2009). In contrast, people who deny their illness and use disengagement coping methods such as alcohol or drug use have faster disease progression and worse physical health (Chida & Vedhara, 2009; Moskowitz et al., 2009). Some of these coping strategies may matter more in certain contexts. For example, taking direct action to cope appears to benefit

physical health when it occurs soon after HIV diagnosis (Moskowitz et al., 2009). Receiving support from both health care professionals and family and friends also leads to better psychological adjustment (Moskowitz et al., 2009; Reilly & Woo, 2004).

Interventions tailored to the person's specific situation and needs have advantages over less personalized programs (Moskowitz & Wrubel, 2005). Cognitive behavioral and stress management interventions are generally effective in reducing the anxiety, depression, and distress of those who are HIV positive and improve their quality of life (Crepaz et al., 2008; Scott-Sheldon et al., 2008; van Luenen et al., 2018). Psychosocial interventions also improve HIV medication adherence (Spaan et al., 2018). But while some cognitive behavioral stress management interventions also report beneficial effects on physiological health outcomes (Antoni et al., 1991, 2000), most interventions do not (Scott-Sheldon et al., 2008).

Psychologists can also help HIV patients adhere to the complex medical regimens designed to control HIV infection (Simoni et al., 2006), particularly those patients who have the greatest difficulty with adherence (Amico, Harman, & Johnson, 2006). HAART consists of a combination of antiretroviral medications; patients often take other drugs to combat side effects of the antiretroviral drugs, as well as drugs to fight opportunistic infections. These regimens may include as many as a dozen drugs, all of which require precise timing. When patients do not follow the schedule, the effectiveness diminishes. Psychologists can help patients adhere to this schedule as well as facilitate their self-management skills. For example, the technique of motivational interviewing appeared to be successful in helping with the scheduling aspect of HAART adherence (DiIorio et al., 2008).

Another aspect of adjustment to HIV infection is finding meaning in the experience and developing the potential for growth and positive experiences. People with AIDS and their caregivers often succeed in finding positive experiences in their lives. In two studies (Milam, 2004; Updegraff et al., 2000), over half of individuals with HIV or AIDS had experienced positive changes, and in another study (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000), more than 99% of AIDS patients and caregivers were able to recall a positive experience. The search for positive meaning may even influence the course of HIV infection by affecting CD4 count (Ickovics et al., 2006). This quest for positive meaning is common to the experience of many people with chronic illness (Updegraff & Taylor, 2000), and this attitude may also appear in those who are dying.



BECOMING HEALTHIER

1. If you have a chronic illness, take charge of its management yourself but get support.

Action Plan: Understand your condition and form a cooperative relationship with health care professionals.

2. If you are the primary caregiver for someone who is chronically ill, don't ignore your own health—both physical and psychological.

Action Plan: Regularly schedule time for yourself.

3. If you have type 1 diabetes, you can live a long and productive life, but you must adhere faithfully to a lifelong regimen that includes diet, insulin injection, and regular exercise. If you live with someone with diabetes, offer social and emotional support and encourage that person to stick with required health practices.

Action Plan: Make a plan for adherence and enlist the support of other people or even technology (smartphone apps, test reminders) to help you keep on track.

4. Realize that type 2 diabetes can develop at any age, and this disorder may have few symptoms.

Action Plan: Monitor your blood sugar through regular physical exams.

5. If you have asthma, try to minimize attacks and use of dilators.

Action Plan: Concentrate on taking preventative medication and learn your triggers to avoid attacks.

6. The most common mode of HIV transmission is through sexual contact.

Action Plan: Protect yourself against HIV; use condoms.

7. If you are the primary caregiver for someone with a terminal chronic disease such as AIDS or Alzheimer's disease, take care of yourself as well.

Action Plan: Seek social and emotional support through groups specifically convened to offer such support. Take breaks from caregiving, allowing others to assume those responsibilities for a while.

8. If you have a chronic disease or if you are the caregiver for someone with such a disease, realize that a wide variety of websites exist as support.

Action Plan: Use the Internet to gain information and support. Do not use these websites as a substitute for health care but allow these resources to supplement your knowledge and support.

IN SUMMARY

Acquired immune deficiency syndrome is the result of depletion of the immune system after infection with the human immunodeficiency virus. When the immune system fails to defend the body, a number of diseases may develop, including bacterial, viral, fungal, and parasitic infections that are uncommon in people who have functioning immune systems.

The modes of transmission of HIV are behavioral, with receptive anal intercourse and the sharing of needles for intravenous drug injection the two behaviors that have spread the infection to the most people in the United States. Unprotected heterosexual contact with an infected partner accounts for a larger proportion of people with HIV worldwide. The number of babies infected with HIV

has decreased because antiretroviral drug therapies sharply decrease transmission from an infected mother during the birth process.

Psychologists use a variety of interventions to help patients reduce high-risk behaviors, cope with their illness, manage their symptoms, and adhere to the complex drug regimens that improve survival. In addition, psychologists have provided counseling services for those seeking to be tested and for those whose tests reveal infection. These programs not only encourage protective behaviors but also emphasize the role of positive health in combating AIDS.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Although HIV is a virus, its transmission and the progression of HIV disease are best understood through the biopsychosocial model. Classify the factors that relate to HIV transmission and progression into those that are biological, psychological, and social.

11-6 Facing Death

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 11-12** Understand the unique issues experienced by people who face death
- 11-13** Critique Kübler-Ross's stage theories of dying and bereavement
- 11-14** Identify interventions that may help people adjust to a terminal illness

Over the last century, life expectancy has increased. People do not necessarily expect a long life, but they prefer it, saying that a life of about 85 years is about right (Lang, Baltes, & Wagner, 2007). However, people also want to have control over the end of their lives, including when and how they die. This desire is consistent with the concept of “the good death,” which consists of physical comfort, social support, appropriate medical care, and attempts to minimize psychological distress for the dying person and the family (Carr, 2003). What do we know about the issues that people deal with when they are dying and how people adjust to losing a loved one?

Adjusting to Terminal Illness

The experience of a “good death” is possible for many. Most of the leading causes of death in the United States and other industrialized countries are chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, Alzheimer's disease, kidney disease, chronic liver disease, and HIV infection. These diseases are often fatal, but death is not sudden, giving people and their families an opportunity to adjust. Even if the chronic disease does not signal terminal illness, the diagnosis entails loss and thus the need to adapt (Murray, 2001).

A common perception is that people go through several predictable stages of adaptation to a terminal

illness. This perception was popularized by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross (1969). Kübler-Ross's stages included denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Denial is a failure to accept the validity or the severity of the diagnosis; people use this defense mechanism to deal with the anxiety they experience when they learn of their condition (Livneh & Antonak, 2005). Anger is another emotional reaction and bargaining often takes the form of trying to negotiate a better outcome, either with God or with health care personnel. Depression is a common response of those who come to understand the progression of their disease, followed by acceptance of the situation.

Was Kübler-Ross correct? While it is true that people react to a terminal diagnosis with reactions such as denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance, there is no evidence that people respond in a set pattern (Schulz & Aderman, 1974). Nor is there any evidence that people *should* experience these reactions in a set pattern. Instead, people diagnosed with chronic diseases and people with terminal illness usually exhibit a range of negative reactions, but they may also experience positive responses oriented around growth and finding meaning in their situation.

A more useful conceptualization of adaptation to terminal illness is the notion of the dying role (Emanuel, Bennett, & Richardson, 2007). This role is an extension of the sick role, which we described in Chapter 3. Like the sick role, the dying role includes certain privileges and responsibilities and can take many forms, both healthy and unhealthy. Three key elements are involved: practical, relational, and personal. The practical element includes the tasks that people need to arrange at the end of their lives, such as arranging financial matters and making plans for medical care as the disease progresses. The relational element involves reconciling the dying role with other roles, such as caregiver, spouse, and parent. This reconciliation may be difficult: The dying role is not automatically compatible with these other roles, so the dying person must work to find ways to integrate these roles. The personal element involves “finishing one's life story” (Emanuel et al., 2007, p. 159). This element may prompt people to reexamine their life while thinking about its end and to derive new meaning from it. This new meaning may constitute a reintegration (Knight & Emanuel, 2007), or some less healthy outcome may occur.

Barriers to a good adjustment include institutional impediments and lack of access to palliative care. Institutional barriers occur when people cannot assume the dying role because health care professionals keep

them in the sick role, even though it is inappropriate (Emanuel et al., 2007). Medical care is so oriented toward cures that accepting death may be difficult for medical practitioners. Appropriate care, such as hospice care or support for home care, may be unavailable, forcing people to stay in a hospital that may not serve their needs. Concentrating on the physical aspects of dying does not allow people to work toward the social and personal tasks from which they may derive a feeling of completion and reintegration.

Entry into the dying role typically meets with loss and grief (Emanuel et al., 2007). The person faces the loss of physical abilities, social relationships, and the experiences of continued life. People imagine that those in this situation are frightened of dying, but research involving people with terminal illnesses indicates otherwise (McKechnie, Macleod, & Keeling, 2007). Instead, the concerns of the dying revolve around anxiety—over their condition, whether they would be able to complete planned activities, and provisions for managing their comfort during the last stages of their disease. Because their disease imposes physical limitations on their activities, they feel unable to “live until they died” (McKechnie et al., 2007, p. 367).

In recent years, a brief psychotherapy called *dignity therapy* has been evaluated as a way to help terminal patients deal with the psychological issues of facing death. Dignity therapy provides patients with a chance to reflect on aspects of their lives that matter most, as well as to record what they would most like to be remembered for. As such, dignity therapy seeks to address the personal elements of the dying role. Randomized trials of dignity therapy in Western populations show that while it may not substantially reduce clinical indices of depression among terminal patients, it does improve self-reported end-of-life experiences, such as quality of life, dignity, spiritual well-being, and perceived appreciation from family (Chochinov et al., 2011). However, an attempt to provide dignity therapy to a sample of Japanese terminal cancer patients encountered a number of difficulties, including a reluctance among Japanese patients to want to discuss issues of dying and death (Akechi et al., 2012). These findings highlight that fact that issues surrounding death are culturally influenced, and some of the personal elements of the dying role may be tied to Western cultural values rather than universal. For example, Western individuals tend to respond to thoughts of death by turning attention toward the self and acting in ways that preserve self-esteem, whereas Eastern individuals tend to respond to thoughts of

death by turning attention toward others (Ma-Kellams & Blascovich, 2011). Thus, sensitivity to cultural differences surrounding issues of death is a challenge for those interacting with terminal patients. Regardless of culture, death influences not only the patient but also the family, as family members face the process of grieving the loss of a loved one.

Grieving

Loss and grief are also common to bereavement, making the reactions and processes of adaptation applicable to family and friends after the death of a loved one (Murray, 2001). Thus, a diagnosis of chronic illness, awareness of a terminal condition, and loss of a loved one provoke similar reactions, with similar possibilities for outcomes. That is, bereavement may result in caregivers’ experiencing worsened symptoms or improvements (Aneshensel et al., 2004) and, eventually, growth (Hogan & Schmidt, 2002).

The similarities between those who are dying and those who are bereaved have led to similar theories of adaptation, including a stage theory of bereavement with stages of disbelief, yearning, anger, depression, and then acceptance. As with Kübler-Ross’s stage theory of adaptation to dying, there is little evidence to support a stage theory of bereavement (Maciejewski et al., 2007). People exhibit some, none, or all of these reactions. A potentially better way to describe people’s reactions to bereavement is to acknowledge that some people react differently to bereavement than others. One study of over 400 German adults’ reactions to bereavement (Mancini, Bonanno, & Clark, 2011) identified four different profiles of responses. Most adults exhibited a response called *resiliency*, characterized by stable levels of well-being from before a loss to four years after a loss of a loved one. Only 21% of the adults showed a response called *acute-recovery*, characterized by a drop in well-being at the time of loss, followed by a gradual return to normal. About 15% of adults showed *chronic low levels* of well-being that were relatively unaffected by bereavement. Surprisingly, about 5% of adults showed *improvement*, with levels of well-being that increased in the years following the death of a loved one. Clearly, people’s responses to bereavement are varied and do not fit neatly into a stage model, with most people showing fairly stable well-being, rather than a passage through a series of discrete negative emotional states.

Bereavement typically includes negative emotions, and people have difficulty accepting such emotions

as normal. Even among health care professionals, the grieving process may seem abnormal when people exhibit strong negative reactions or their feelings persist for a time considered too lengthy. Thoughts of lost loved ones and longings for their company can persist for many years (Camelley et al., 2006). Experts suggest that it is these people who may benefit the most from psychological intervention (Mancini, Griffin, & Bonanno, 2012). In contrast, psychological intervention may have little to no benefit among people who do not show persistent and elevated levels of distress.

Even the terminology used by mental health professionals carries negative connotations. People who are adapting to the loss of a loved one are referred to as *recovering*, which implies that these individuals will go back to “normal” and that their grief reactions signal psychological problems. This tendency to “pathologize” the bereavement process should be avoided (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2008). Some grief responses may present problems for adaptation, but like the process of adapting to chronic and terminal illness, grieving offers the promise of transformative and spiritual growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2006). Thus, all three processes share essential elements.

IN SUMMARY

Facing death requires adjustment for the person who is dying and for the family. Although the process of stages of acceptance has gained popular appeal, no research supports this view. Instead,

people who are dying experience a variety of negative reactions that may be better conceptualized as a role with practical, relationship, and personal elements. Some people can work through challenges and have access to the facilities to experience a “good death,” allowing them to die without pain but with social support, appropriate medical care, and minimal psychological distress. Their adaptation may leave them with a sense of completion and even transcendence. Growth is also a possibility for those who grieve for loved ones, but the bereaved also face a process of adjustment that includes negative emotions. A wide variety of emotional responses follow bereavement, but no research suggests that people pass through predictable stages of grief. The negative emotions that are involved in grieving should not be seen as abnormal; resolving grief may take years, but this process also offers the promise of positive change.

APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

1. What would you tell a person who was concerned about not feeling the “correct way” about their own or a family member’s terminal illness?

Questions

This chapter has addressed six basic questions:

1. What is the impact of chronic disease on patients and families?

Long-term chronic illnesses bring about a transition in people’s lives, requiring adaptations to live with symptoms and receive medical care, changing relationships, and pushing people toward a reevaluation of themselves. Support groups and programs designed by health psychologists help people cope with the emotional problems associated with chronic illness, problems that traditional

medical care often overlooks. Chronic diseases may be terminal, which forces people to consider their impending death.

2. What is the impact of Alzheimer’s disease?

Alzheimer’s disease damages the brain and produces memory loss, language problems, agitation and irritability, sleep disorders, suspiciousness, wandering, incontinence, and loss of ability to perform routine care. The most common form of Alzheimer’s disease occurs through a genetic vulnerability combined with environmental risks. Age is the main risk, with the prevalence doubling for every decade after age 65. Lifestyle factors relate to

the development of Alzheimer's disease, making prevention a possibility. Medical treatments are being developed, but the main management strategies consist of interventions to allow patients longer periods of functioning, and counseling and support groups for family members, who frequently experience more stress than the patient.

3. What is involved in adjusting to diabetes?

Diabetes, both insulin-dependent (type 1) and non-insulin-dependent (type 2), requires changes in lifestyle that include monitoring and adherence to a treatment regimen. Treatments include insulin injections for type 1 diabetics and adherence to careful dietary restrictions, scheduling of meals, avoidance of certain foods, regular medical visits, and routine exercise for all diabetics. Health psychologists are involved in helping diabetics learn self-care to control the dangerous effects of their condition.

4. How does asthma affect the lives of people with this disease?

Inflammation of the bronchial tubes is the underlying basis for asthma. Combined with this inflammation, triggering stimuli or events cause bronchial constriction that produces difficulty in breathing. Asthma may be fatal, and it is the leading cause of disability among children. The origin of this process is not understood, but medication can control the inflammation and decrease the risk of attacks. People with asthma are faced with a complex medication regimen that they must follow to decrease the risk of attacks.

5. How can HIV infection be managed?

Infection with the human immunodeficiency virus depletes the immune system, leaving the body vulnerable to acquired immune deficiency syndrome and a variety of opportunistic infections. HIV epidemics affect four different populations in the United States: (1) men who have sex with men, (2) injection drug users, (3) heterosexuals, and (4) children born to HIV-positive mothers. Psychologists are involved in the HIV epidemic by encouraging protective behaviors, counseling infected people to help them cope with living with a chronic disease, and helping patients adhere to complex medical regimens that have changed HIV infection to a manageable chronic disease.

6. What adaptations do people make to dying and grieving?

People tend to react to the knowledge that they have a terminal illness with a variety of negative emotions, and the process of grieving also includes negative emotions. Contrary to popular conceptualizations, however, these reactions do not progress through a pattern of stages. Instead, dying may be conceptualized as a role that includes practical, relational, and personal elements that people encounter in their process of adaptation. Grieving can also be conceptualized as a process with negative emotions but also with the possibility of growth.

Suggested Readings

- Asthma Action America. (2004). *Children and asthma in America*. Retrieved August 29, 2008, from <http://www.asthmainamerica.com/frequency.html>. This comprehensive survey details the impact of asthma on the lives of children and their caregivers, examining the misperceptions about the disease, the available treatments, and recommendations for more effective strategies to deal with this disease.
- DeBaggio, T. (2002). *Losing my mind: An intimate look at life with Alzheimer's*. New York, NY: Free Press. When former newspaper writer Thomas DeBaggio began to recognize symptoms of Alzheimer's disease at age 57, he decided to write about his experience of "losing his mind." The result is a moving account of Alzheimer's disease from an insider's point of view.
- Stanton, A. L., & Revenson, T. A. (2011). Adjustment to chronic disease: Progress and promise in research. In H. Friedman (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of health psychology* (pp. 241–268). This chapter examines the growing body of longitudinal research on adjustment to chronic illness, exploring the important risk and protective factors that affect the process.
- UNAIDS. (2010). *UNAIDS report on the global AIDS epidemic, 2010*. Geneva, Switzerland: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. This comprehensive report details the status of HIV infection worldwide and in each geographic area, analyzing the nature of the epidemic in each region and the progress that has been made in controlling the disease.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- | | |
|---|---|
| 12-1 Trace the route that smoke takes through the respiratory system | 12-8 Contrast the health risks of different forms of tobacco use, including smoking cigarettes, smoking pipes or cigars, e-cigarette use, passive smoking, and smokeless tobacco use |
| 12-2 Identify the structures that smoking may damage | 12-9 Evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to reduce smoking rates |
| 12-3 Evaluate the dangers of four components of tobacco | 12-10 Compare the effectiveness of pharmacological interventions to behavioral programs aimed at helping smokers quit |
| 12-4 Identify three objections to smoking raised by authorities between the discovery of tobacco by Europeans and World War II | 12-11 Compare the health impact of the risk of weight gain after quitting to the health benefits of quitting |
| 12-5 Evaluate four demographic factors that differentiate smokers from nonsmokers | 12-12 List four health benefits to smokers who quit |
| 12-6 Contrast the reasons that people start smoking with the reasons that people continue to smoke | |
| 12-7 Describe the risks of smoking for cancers, cardiovascular disease, and lower respiratory disease | |

CHAPTER 12

Smoking Tobacco

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Famous Former Smokers

Smoking and the Respiratory System

- Functioning of the Respiratory System
- What Components in Smoke Are Dangerous?

A Brief History of Tobacco Use Choosing to Smoke

- Who Smokes and Who Does Not?
- Why Do People Smoke?

Health Consequences of Tobacco Use

- Cigarette Smoking
- Cigar and Pipe Smoking
- E-cigarettes
- Passive Smoking
- Smokeless Tobacco

Interventions for Reducing Smoking Rates

- Deterring Smoking
- Quitting Smoking
- Who Quits and Who Does Not?
- Relapse Prevention

Effects of Quitting

- Quitting and Weight Gain
- Health Benefits of Quitting

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on five basic questions:

1. How does smoking affect the respiratory system?
2. Who chooses to smoke and why?
3. What are the health consequences of tobacco use?
4. How can smoking rates be reduced?
5. What are the effects of quitting?

In the United States, 480,000 people die every year from tobacco use (USDHHS, 2014). It's quite easy to read through the number 480,000; let's see if we can personalize it. Each year in the United States, smoking kills enough people to wipe out more than half the population of Delaware. More people die every year from smoking than live within the city limits of Long Beach, California. Stated differently, an average of 1,315 people die *every day* in the United States from tobacco-related causes. Throughout the world, the deaths total is 8 million people per year (World Health Organization, 2019b), which is equivalent to the population of Israel. Later, we summarize the various risks from smoking cigarettes, e-cigarettes, cigars, and pipes, as well as other tobacco products, including the dangers of passive smoking and smokeless tobacco. This chapter also includes information on the prevalence of smoking, the reasons why people smoke, and some methods of preventing and reducing smoking. First, however, we briefly review the effects of smoking on the respiratory system, the body system most immediately affected by smoking.

12-1 Smoking and the Respiratory System

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 12-1 Trace the route that smoke takes through the respiratory system
- 12-2 Identify the structures that smoking may damage
- 12-3 Evaluate the dangers of four components of tobacco

Respiration takes oxygen into the body and expels carbon dioxide. This process draws air deep into the lungs, which routinely introduces a variety of particles into the lungs. Thus, smoking provides a pathway for lung damage and disease.



Check **HEALTH RISKS** Regarding Tobacco Use

Check the items that apply to you.

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. I have not smoked more than 100 cigarettes in my life. | <input type="checkbox"/> 6. I am a smoker who believes that smoking is probably harmful, but I plan to stop smoking before those effects can harm me. | <input type="checkbox"/> 11. I live with someone who smokes inside the dwelling. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. I have probably smoked between 100 and 200 cigarettes in my life, but I have not smoked at all in more than five years and have no desire to do so. | <input type="checkbox"/> 7. I don't smoke cigarettes, but I do smoke at least one cigar or one pipe of tobacco a day. | <input type="checkbox"/> 12. I use smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco) on a daily basis. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. I currently smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day. | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. I don't smoke cigarettes, but I do use e-cigarettes. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. I currently smoke more than two packs of cigarettes a day. | <input type="checkbox"/> 9. I smoke cigarettes as well as use e-cigarettes. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. I am a smoker who believes that the health risks of smoking have been exaggerated. | <input type="checkbox"/> 10. I smoke cigars or a pipe because I believe that they carry a very low risk for any health problems. | |

Except for the first two statements, each of these items represents a health risk from tobacco products, which account for about 480,000 deaths a year in the United States, mostly from cancer, heart disease, and chronic lower respiratory disease. Count your checkmarks for the last 10 items to evaluate your risks. As you read this chapter, you will see that some of these items represent riskier choices than others.



Real-World Profile of **FAMOUS FORMER SMOKERS**



Action Sports Photography/Shutterstock.com

Smoking is the leading cause of death in the world, and it affects famous people in ways that are similar to everyone else. That is, celebrities are as vulnerable to the health risks of smoking as others, and they are also as subject to the warnings about the dangers. Some have heeded the warnings about the health risks of smoking, whereas others have not. Actresses Jennifer Aniston and Gwyneth Paltrow, President Barack Obama, and Prince Harry are among the growing group of people who have given up smoking (Brichard, 2018). For Aniston, Paltrow, and Obama, the struggle was long and difficult, including attempts that failed. All had also smoked since adolescence and yet, all these celebrities finally managed to quit. However, others did not quit.

Some of the famous people who have continued to smoke have experienced the most serious of consequences of their behavior—they died of smoking-related disorders (*South China Morning Post*, 2016). Walt Disney, founder of Disney Studios and Disneyland, died at age 65 of complications after surgery to remove a tumor from his lung. Ian Fleming, the novelist who created the character of James Bond, died of a heart attack at age 56. Founder of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, R. J. Reynolds, Sr., died of pancreatic cancer at age 67. His son, R. J. Reynolds, Jr., died of emphysema at age 58, and his son, R. J. Reynolds III, died of emphysema at age 60. Their causes of death all are related to their use of tobacco.

Functioning of the Respiratory System

The exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide occurs deep in the lungs. To get air into the lungs, the diaphragm and the muscles between the ribs (intercostal muscles) contract, increasing the volume within the

chest. As the space inside the chest increases, the pressure within the chest falls below atmospheric pressure, forcing air into the lungs.

Figure 12.1 illustrates where air goes on its way to the lungs. The nasal passages, pharynx, larynx, trachea, bronchi, and bronchioles conduct air into the lungs. These passages have little ability to absorb oxygen,

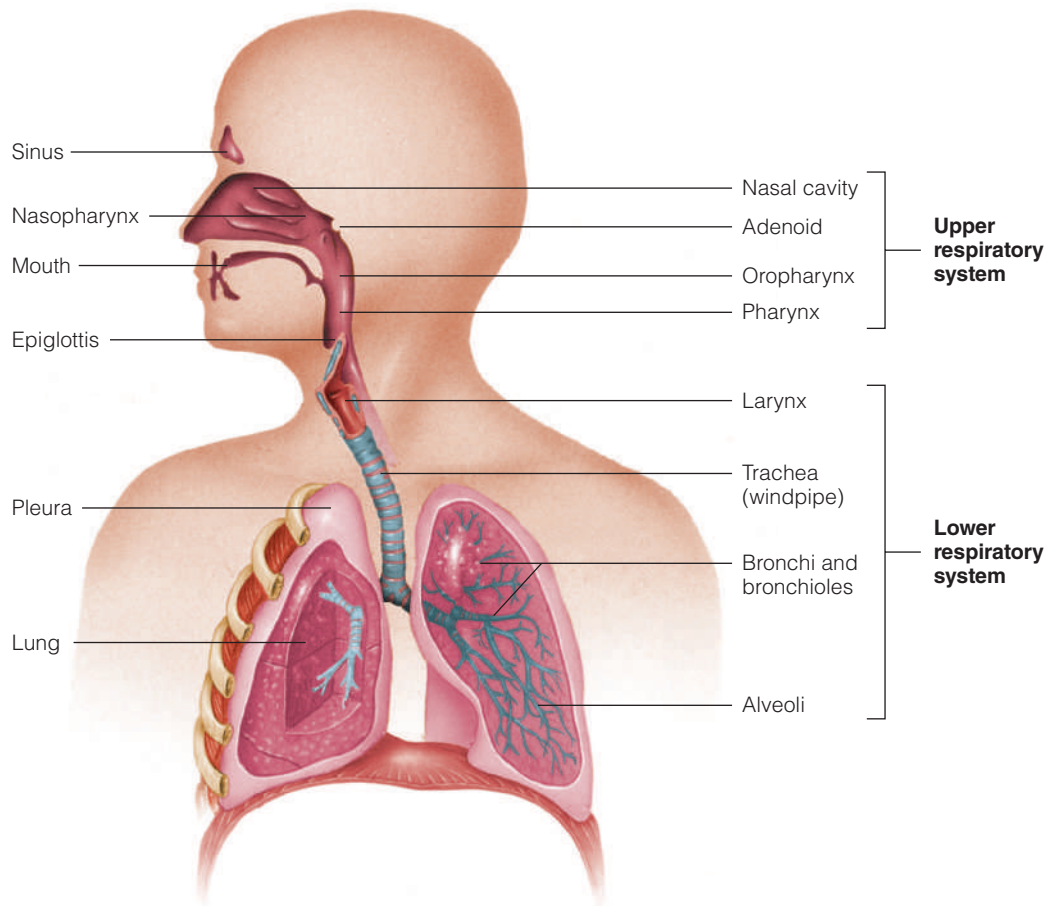


FIGURE 12.1 Respiratory system.

Source: *Introduction to microbiology* (p. 525), by J. L. Ingraham & C. A. Ingraham. From INGRAHAM/INGRAHAM, *Introduction to Microbiology*, 1E.

but the process of inhalation, warms, humidifies, and cleanses the air. Millions of alveoli, located at the ends of the bronchioles, are the site of oxygen and carbon dioxide exchange. Air rich in oxygen is drawn into the lungs and reaches the alveoli, where an exchange of carbon dioxide and oxygen occurs in the capillaries surrounding each alveolus. The blood, now oxygen rich, travels back to the heart, which pumps it out to every area in the body.

Air is an excellent medium for introducing foreign matter into the body. Airborne particles potentially move into the lungs with every breath. Protective mechanisms in the respiratory system, such as sneezing and coughing, expel some dangerous particles. Noxious stimulation in the nasal passages may activate the sneeze reflex, whereas stimulation in the lower respiratory system promotes the cough reflex.

Several respiratory disorders are of interest to health psychologists. All kinds of smoke as well as other types of air pollution increase mucus secretion in the respiratory system but decrease the activity of the respiratory system's protective mechanisms, thus making the system vulnerable to problems. As mucus builds up, people cough to get rid of it, but coughing may also irritate the bronchial walls. Irritation and infection of the bronchial walls may damage the respiratory system and destroy tissue in the bronchi. The formation of scar tissue in the bronchi, irritation or infection of bronchial tissue, and coughing are characteristics of **bronchitis**, one of several *chronic lower respiratory diseases* (also called *chronic obstructive pulmonary disease*, or COPD) that are the fourth leading cause of death in the United States (Xu et al., 2020).

Acute bronchitis is caused by infection and usually responds quickly to antibiotics. When the irritation persists and the mechanism underlying the illness continues, it can become a chronic problem. Cigarette smoke is a major cause of chronic bronchitis, but environmental air pollution and occupational hazards also contribute to the development of chronic bronchitis.

The most common of the chronic lower respiratory diseases is **emphysema**, which occurs when scar tissue and mucus obstruct the respiratory passages, bronchi lose their elasticity and collapse, and air is trapped in the alveoli. The trapped air breaks down the alveolar walls, and the remaining alveoli become enlarged. Both damaged and enlarged alveoli have reduced surface area for the exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide. Damage also obstructs blood flow to the undamaged alveoli, and so the respiratory

system becomes restricted. The loss of efficiency in the respiratory system means that respiration delivers a limited amount of oxygen. People with emphysema experience problems with breathing and usually cannot exercise strenuously.

Chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and lung cancer are all diseases of the respiratory system associated with the inhalation of irritating, damaging particles such as smoke. **Figure 12.2** shows how smoke can damage the lungs, producing bronchitis and emphysema. Cigarette smoking is of particular interest to health psychologists because it is a voluntary behavior that can be avoided, whereas air pollution and occupational hazards are social problems not under direct personal control. Thus, smoking is the target for much negative publicity and for interventions for change. But what specifically makes inhaled smoke dangerous?

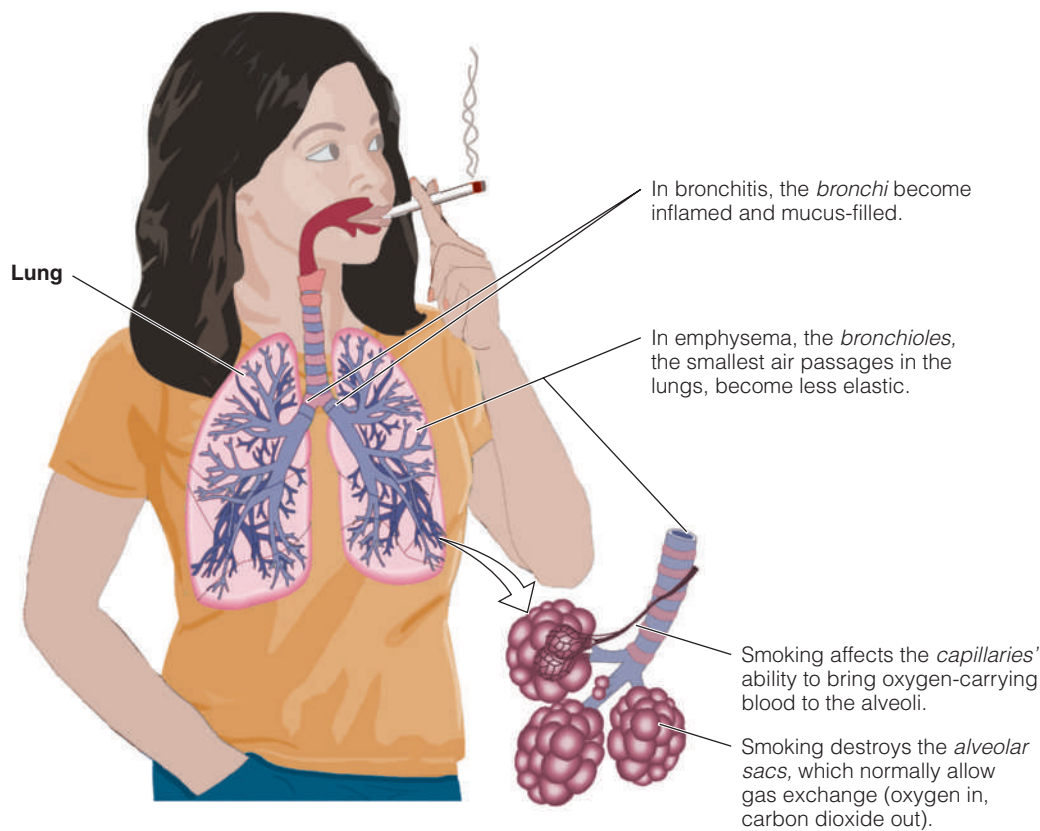


FIGURE 12.2 How smoking affects the lungs.

Source: *An invitation to health* (7th ed., p. 493), by D. Hales, 1997, Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. From HALES, *Invitation to Health*, 7E.

What Components in Smoke are Dangerous?

The processed tobacco found in cigarettes contains at least 4,000 compounds; at least 60 of these are known carcinogens—substances that are capable of causing cancer (USDHHS, 2010c). All of the compounds in cigarette smoke produce a complex mixture, and research has not isolated the specific dangers associated with each. However, nicotine is the pharmacological agent that underlies addiction to cigarette smoking (USDHHS, 2014). What are the effects of nicotine in the body?

Nicotine is a stimulant drug—an “upper”—that affects both the central and peripheral nervous systems (USDHHS, 2014). Certain central nervous system receptor sites are specific for nicotine; that is, the brain responds to nicotine, as it does to many drugs. But smoking is a particularly effective means of delivering drugs to the brain. Nicotine, for example, can be found in the brain seven seconds after having been ingested by smoking—faster than via intravenous injection. The half-life of nicotine, the time it takes to lose half its strength, is 30 to 40 minutes. Addicted smokers so not often go more than this length of time between “fixes.”

When nicotine is delivered to the brain, it occupies receptor sites and affects the release and metabolism of several neurotransmitters, including acetylcholine, epinephrine, norepinephrine, glutamate, and dopamine (USDHHS, 2014). The overall action is an increase in cortical arousal. In addition, smoking releases beta-endorphins, which are the brain’s natural opiates. The pleasurable effects of smoking may be due to the release of these neurotransmitters. Nicotine also increases the metabolic level and decreases appetite, which explains the tendency for smokers to be thinner than nonsmokers. However, nicotine may not be the main culprit responsible for the dangerous health effects of smoking; other dangerous compounds exist in tobacco.

The term *tar* describes the water-soluble residue of tobacco smoke condensate, which is known to contain a number of compounds identified or suspected as carcinogens. Although tobacco companies have reduced the level of tar in cigarettes, no level is safe. Nevertheless, as tar levels go down, death rates from smoking-related diseases also go down. However, experienced smokers who smoke low-nicotine cigarettes tend to increase their rate of smoking and to inhale low-nicotine smoke more deeply, thus exposing themselves to more of the dangerous tar.

Additional by-products of tobacco smoke can be considered health risks. **Acrolein** and **formaldehyde** belong to a class of irritating compounds called

aldehydes. Formaldehyde, a demonstrated carcinogen, disrupts tissue proteins and causes cell damage. **Nitric oxide** and **hydrocyanic acid** are gases generated in smoking tobacco that affect oxygen metabolism and therefore could be dangerous. Because tobacco companies do not provide the public with specific information about the content of cigarettes, consumers encounter this barrier when trying to know their level of health risk (USDHHS, 2014).

IN SUMMARY

The respiratory system allows oxygen to be taken into the lungs where an exchange with carbon dioxide occurs at the level of the alveoli. Along with air, other particles can enter the lungs; some of these particles can be harmful. Cigarette smoke can cause damage to the lungs, and smokers are prone to bronchitis, an inflammation of the bronchi. Cigarette smoke contributes heavily to the development of chronic lower respiratory diseases, such as chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Several chemicals, either within the tobacco itself or produced as a by-product of smoking, can cause organic damage. Although nicotine in large doses is extremely toxic, precise harmful effects on the average smoker are difficult to assess. This difficulty exists because the level of nicotine in commercial cigarettes varies with the level of tars, another class of potentially hazardous substances. Thus, determining what specific components of smoke connect to which sources of illness and death is difficult.

APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

1. Your friend started smoking about two months ago. Explain to her how smoking will harm her respiratory system if she continues and what specific components of smoke will do the damage.

12-2 A Brief History of Tobacco Use

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 12-4** Identify three objections to smoking raised by authorities between the discovery of tobacco by Europeans and World War II

When Christopher Columbus and other early European explorers arrived in the Western hemisphere, they found that the Native Americans had a custom considered odd by European standards: The natives carried rolls of dried leaves, which they set afire and then “drank” the smoke. The leaves were, of course, tobacco. Those early European sailors tried smoking, liked it, and soon became quite dependent on it. Although Columbus disapproved of his sailors using tobacco, he quickly recognized that “it was not within their power to refrain from indulging in the habit” (Kluger, 1996, p. 9). Within a century, smoking and the cultivation of tobacco spread around the world. Although national and international efforts to decrease tobacco use have shown some success (WHO, 2019b), no country where people have learned to use tobacco has ever successfully eliminated the habit (WHO, 2015).

The popularity of the smoking habit grew rapidly among Europeans, but it was not without its detractors. Elizabethan England adopted the use of tobacco, although Elizabeth I disapproved, as did her successor, James I. Another prominent Elizabethan, Sir Francis Bacon, spoke against tobacco and the hold it exerted over its users. Many objections to tobacco were similar; people who became addicted to it often spent money on tobacco even though they could not afford it. Because of its scarcity, tobacco was expensive; in London in 1610, it was sold for an equal weight of silver.

In 1633, the Turkish sultan Murad IV decreed the death penalty for subjects who were caught smoking. He then conducted “sting” operations on the streets of his empire and beheaded those people who were caught using tobacco (Kluger, 1996). From the early Romanoff Empire in Russia to the 17th-century Japan, the penalties for tobacco use were also severe. Nevertheless, the habit spread. In the Spanish colonies, smoking by priests during Mass became so prevalent that the Catholic Church forbade it. In 1642 and again in 1650, tobacco was the subject of two formal papal bulls, but in 1725, Pope Benedict XIII annulled all edicts against tobacco—he liked to use snuff, which is ground tobacco.

Over the centuries, tobacco has been used in a variety of forms, including cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and snuff. Although some soldiers smoked cigarettes during the U.S. Civil War, cigarette use was not popular until the 20th century. During that time, many men did not consider cigarette smoking to be a manly habit. Ironically, cigarette smoking was not socially acceptable for women; thus, few women smoked during the 19th century. Cigarette smoking became more popular when

readymade cigarettes came on the market during the 1880s.

The development of the “blended” cigarette, a mixture of air-cured Burley and Turkish varieties of tobacco with flue-cured Virginia tobacco, came about in 1913. This blending process created a cigarette with a pleasing flavor and aroma that was also easy to inhale, prompting widespread adoption of cigarette smoking. Cigarette smoking increased in popularity during World War I, and during the 1920s, the age of the “flapper,” cigarette smoking started to gain popularity among women.

From the time of Columbus until the mid-19th century, tobacco had many detractors, but the objections came from those who damned it on moral, social, xenophobic, or economic grounds rather than for scientific or medical reasons (Kluger, 1996). Despite the condemnation by authorities, the tobacco industry continued to grow. Not until the mid-1960s did scientific evidence on the dangerous consequences of smoking become widely recognized. Indeed, during the 1940s and 1950s, physicians often recommended the practice to their patients as a method of relaxation and stress reduction. Tobacco companies, of course, encouraged this thinking and used a variety of techniques to increase smoking rates (Proctor, 2012). Besides multiple advertising approaches, they provided free cigarettes to soldiers during World War II. At that time, only a few people suspected that smoking might have serious negative health consequences, and tobacco companies promoted the view that smoking was simply a personal choice.

APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

1. From shortly after Christopher Columbus brought tobacco to Europe, tobacco has been the target of condemnation. Which objections were most valid, and who has raised them?

12-3 Choosing to Smoke

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 12-5** Evaluate four demographic factors that differentiate smokers from nonsmokers
- 12-6** Contrast the reasons that people start smoking with the reasons that people continue to smoke

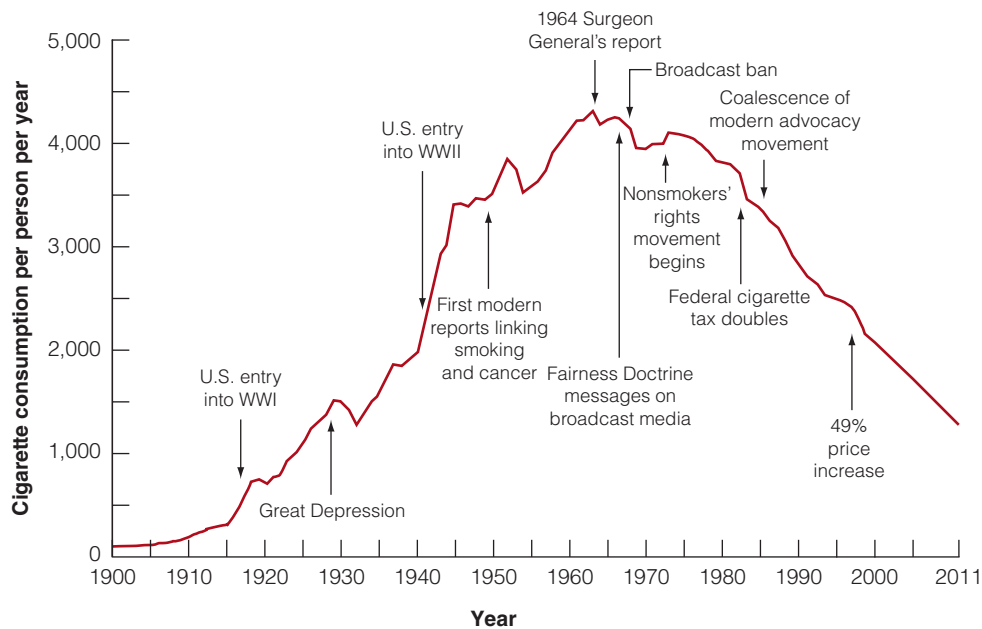


FIGURE 12.3 Cigarette consumption per person 18 and over, United States, 1900 to 2015.

Sources: "Surveillance for Selected Tobacco Use Behaviors—United States, 1900–1994," by G. A. Giovino et al., 1994, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 43, No. SS-3, pp. 6–7; National Center for Health Statistics, 2001, *Health, United States 2001*, Hyattsville, MD: U.S. Government Printing Office; "Consumption of Combustible and Smokeless Tobacco—United States, 2000–2015," by T. W. Wang et al., 2016, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 65(48), 1357–1363.

Unlike many health hazards, smoking is a voluntary behavior, with each person choosing to smoke or not to smoke. What factors influence this behavior?

Several historical and social events in the United States have led to a significant decrease in smoking rates. First was the 1964 report of the Surgeon General of the United States, which spelled out the adverse effects of smoking on health (U.S. Public Health Service [USPHS], 1964). Other events included placing a warning of the potential danger of cigarettes on each cigarette package, banning cigarette advertising on television, designating public buildings and spaces as smoke-free, increasing the price of cigarettes, removing cigarette machines from public places, requiring identification for the purchase of cigarettes, and designing and implementing programs aimed at deterring smoking and encouraging quitting. This combination of factors resulted in a decline of smoking rates in the United States. The highest rate of per capita cigarette consumption occurred in 1966, two years after the first Surgeon General's report on the dangers of smoking. **Figure 12.3** shows a significant decrease in the per capita consumption of cigarettes in the United States

since the Surgeon General's report; it also shows historical events that may have increased or decreased the per capita consumption of cigarettes.

Who Smokes and Who Does Not?

Currently, 16.5% of adults in the United States smoke tobacco, of which 13.7% smoke cigarettes (Creamer et al., 2019). About 60% of those who have ever smoked have quit (Babb et al., 2017). The decline occurred as the number of former smokers decreased and the number of never-smokers increased (see **Figure 12.4**); Aniston, Paltrow, Obama, Harry, and Adele are now among that group of former smokers.

How Do Smokers Differ from Nonsmokers? Smokers differ from nonsmokers in gender, ethnicity, age, occupation, educational level, and a variety of other factors. By gender, about 15.6% of adult men and 12.0% of adult women in the United States are current smokers (Creamer et al., 2019). From 1965 to about 1985, the quit rate was higher for men than it was for women, thus producing a sharper decline in the number of men

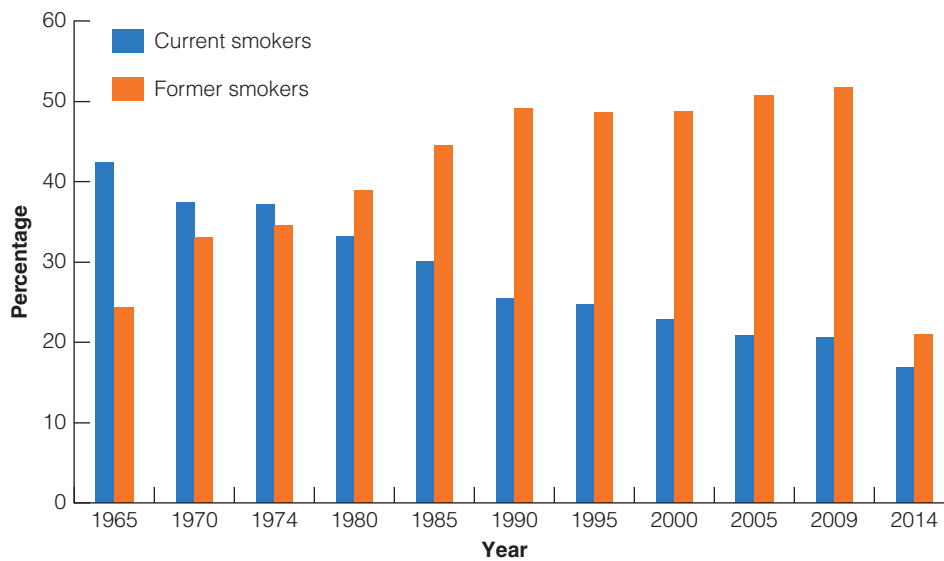


FIGURE 12.4 Percentage of current smokers and former smokers among adults, United States, 1965 to 2018.

Sources: "Trends in tobacco use," by American Lung Association Research and Program Services, Epidemiology and Statistics Unit, 2011, Tables 4 and 15; "Summary Health Statistics: National Health Interview Survey, 201," National Center for Health Statistics, Table A-12. Retrieved from http://ftp.cdc.gov/pub/Health_Statistics/NCHS/NHIS/SHS/2014_SHS_Table_A-12.pdf; "Summary Health Statistics: National Health Interview Survey, 2018," National Center for Health Statistics, Table A-12a. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/shs/tables.htm>.

who smoked. During the past 25 years, the quit rates have been higher for women at times and for men at other times. Smoking rates for both have declined since 2008.

As for ethnic groups, American Indians (including Alaska Natives) have the highest rate of cigarette consumption (about 23%), and Asian Americans have the lowest percentage of smokers (fewer than 7%) (Creamer et al., 2019). Perhaps because many longtime smokers die of cigarette-related causes, smoking prevalence is lowest for people age 65 and older (8.5%). Despite the high cost of cigarettes, people living below the poverty level have higher smoking rates (21.3%) than those who are wealthier (about 7%). Even for those who are not poor, smoking is inversely related to personal net wealth—smokers are poorer than nonsmokers, and poorer smokers are less likely to quit and more likely to relapse than higher-income smokers (Kendzor et al., 2010).

Finally, level of education is a good predictor of smoking rates: the higher the level of education, the lower the rate of smoking (Creamer et al., 2019). In the United States, for example, only 3.7% of people with a graduate (master's or doctoral) degree are current

smokers, whereas more than 36% of people with a General Education Diploma (GED) are current smokers. This difference appears even before students enter college—college-bound high school students smoke at lower rates than those who do not plan to attend college (Miech et al., 2016). **Figure 12.5** shows the inverse relationship between level of smoking and level of education in the United States.

The inverse relationship between level of education and level of smoking holds true for most, but not all, segments of European society. This pattern appeared in a large sample of people in Germany (Schulze & Mons, 2006), but a more complex pattern appeared in a study involving nine European countries (Schaap, van Agt, & Kunst, 2008). The relationship of smoking and education was stronger among younger people, whereas occupational status was more influential among older people in Northern Europe. The pattern was more varied for residents of Southern Europe, but education remained a predictor of smoking.

Smoking Rates Among Young People Both Gwyneth Paltrow (Healthline Editorial Team, 2013)

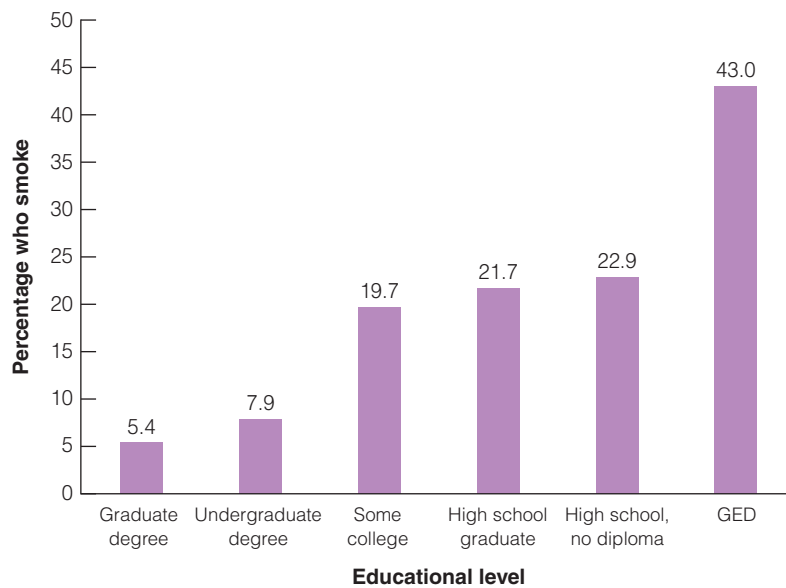


FIGURE 12.5 Percentage of persons 18 and older who are smokers, by educational level, United States, 2018.

Source: “Tobacco product use and cessation indicators among adults—United States, 2018 by M. Creamer et al., 2019, *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 68(45), p. 1016.

and Barack Obama (“Barack Obama Quits,” 2011) started smoking as teenagers, which makes them similar to most smokers. About 6% of ninth-grade boys and 5% of ninth-grade girls smoked at least once during the month before a survey of risky behaviors (Kann et al., 2018). **Figure 12.6** shows slightly different patterns of smoking for female and male students, with male students increasing their levels of smoking throughout high school. By the time students reach 12th grade, about 5% of the boys and the girls are frequent smokers.

Many adolescents begin to experiment with tobacco during middle school and high school, but adolescence is probably not the time that young people adopt a consistent pattern of smoking. This pattern is usually established after age 18 and may consist of being a non-smoker, a light smoker, an occasional smoker, or a heavy smoker. Both Gwyneth Paltrow and Barack Obama began smoking as teenagers and escalated their smoking, becoming heavy smokers during young adulthood. Prince Harry, however, never became a heavy smoker.

Examining tobacco use worldwide since 2000, a report from the World Health Organization (2019b) showed decreasing tobacco use for all age groups, with projections of additional decreases through 2025.

However, variations in tobacco use occur among different regions of the world; countries in Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific have higher rates than countries in the Americas and Africa. In addition, the gender differences in smoking rate are large in some countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, but men use tobacco more than women in all regions.

Why Do People Smoke?

Despite widespread publicity linking cigarette smoking to a variety of health problems, millions of people continue to smoke. That situation is puzzling because many smokers themselves acknowledge the potential dangers of their habit. The question of why people smoke can be divided into two separate ones: Why do people begin to smoke and why do they continue?

Answering first question is difficult because most young people are aware of the hazards of smoking, and many of them become ill from their first attempt at smoking. The best answer to the second question seems to be that different people smoke for different reasons, and the same person may smoke for different reasons in different situations.

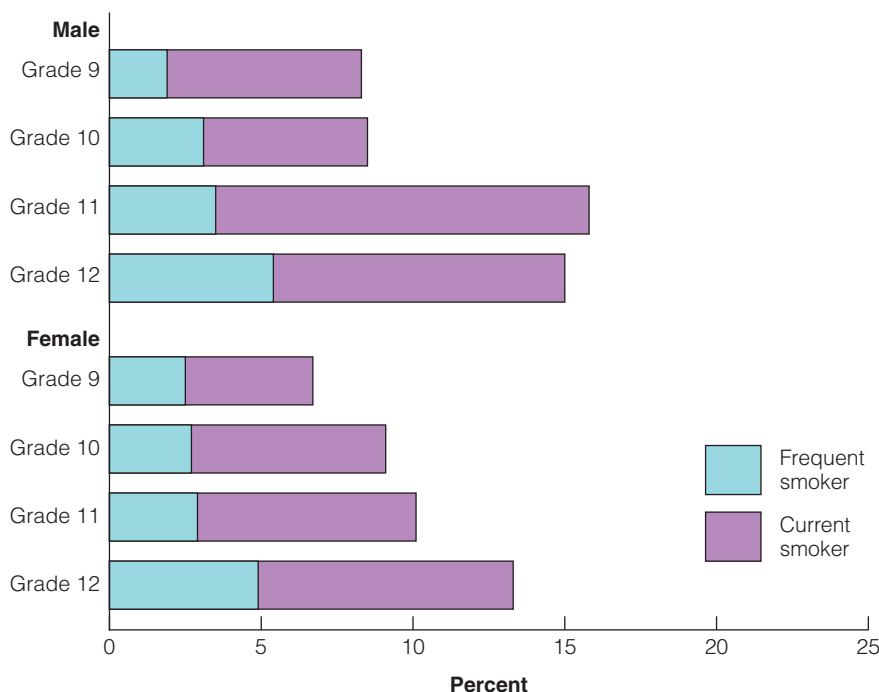


FIGURE 12.6 Current cigarette smoking among high school students by gender, frequency, and grade level, United States, 2017.

Source: L. Kann, T. McManus, W. A. Harris, S. L. Shanklin, K. H. Flint, J. Hawkins et al., “Youth risk behavior surveillance—2017,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 67(8), Tables 56 & 58.

Why Do People Start Smoking? Most young people are aware of the hazards of smoking (Waltenbaugh & Zagumny, 2004); since 1995 high school students in the United States have reported high disapproval ratings of smoking (Johnston et al., 2020), but 24% said that they do not believe that there is a great deal of risk involved in smoking a pack of cigarettes a day. The answer in this apparent contradiction may lie in holding an optimistic bias, believing that the dangers do not apply to them. In addition, researchers have examined at least four explanations for why people begin smoking despite awareness of the dangers: genetic predisposition, peer pressure, advertising, and weight control.

Genetics The first evidence that smoking has some genetic component appeared in the 1950s from studies on twins (Pomerleau & Kardia, 1999). These studies indicated that identical twins tended to be more similar than fraternal twins in their smoking status. More recent research has confirmed genetic factors for smoking initiation and nicotine dependence (Loukola et al., 2014;

Sartor et al., 2015) as well as cessation success (Tobacco and Genetics Consortium, 2010). This research has led to the identification of a large number of genes that affect smoking, mostly through the effect of genes on neurotransmitters in the brain (Wang & Li, 2010).

Researchers have explored the involvement of several neurotransmitters in smoking initiation and in the development of dependence on nicotine. Much of that attention has focused on the monoamine class of neurotransmitters, which contains epinephrine, norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin. Dopamine has been of most interest, but a meta-analysis of this research (Ohmoto et al., 2013) indicated that dopamine’s involvement in smoking does not extend to initiation. Another review (Hogg, 2016) examined the possibility that more than one monoamine neurotransmitter might play a role in smoking through the mechanisms that break down these neurotransmitters. Nicotine slows the breakdown of these neurotransmitters, which increases their availability. Both serotonin and dopamine relate to mood regulation, which may

be more strongly related to the question of why people continue to smoke than why they begin.

The research on the genetics of smoking has confirmed a genetic component, but that research has also determined that the component provides a vulnerability to tobacco use rather than a destiny to smoke. That is, smoking is also influenced by environmental factors. In one longitudinal study of smoking initiation that controlled for genetic relatedness (Slomkowski, 2005), both genetics and social environment contributed to smoking initiation; adolescents who reported a closer connection to smoking siblings were more likely to become smokers. Another study (Wedow et al., 2018) traced a change in heritability over time to the societal attitudes that increasingly discourage smoking. These studies provide evidence for an interaction between genes and environment.

Social Pressure Teenagers tend to be sensitive to social pressure, and having friends, parents, or siblings who smoke increases the chances that a teen will smoke (Vitória, 2009). Peers may influence smoking by offering cigarettes, but overt pressure is not necessary—modeling peers who smoke is more powerful than being pressured by peers. A longitudinal study of peer influences (Mason et al., 2017) showed that adolescents’ perception of their peers’ attitudes and behaviors related to their own smoking. In addition, the closer the relationship, the greater the influence. Young people may begin to smoke to fit in with a social group (Harakeh & Vollebergh, 2012), a close childhood friend (Bricker et al., 2006), or a romantic partner (Kennedy et al., 2011) who smokes.

Young people tend to choose their friends on the basis of similar attitudes, and smoking is one such factor (Ragan, 2016). Prince Harry’s smoking is a good example; his smoking occurred mostly during his wilder days of partying (Brichard, 2018). Social situations may encourage smoking, as they did for Harry, but young in families in which parents or siblings smoke are more likely to do so than teens in nonsmoking families (O’Loughlin et al., 2009), and siblings tend to be more influential than parents in starting to smoke (Mercken et al., 2007). But living with a smoker—even a stepparent—increases the risk that an adolescent will begin to smoke (Fidler et al., 2008).

People are not the only source of modeling for smoking; movies and other media can provide a source of social pressure. A body of evidence implicates the influence of movies in beginning smoking. John Pierce and his colleagues (Distefan et al., 2004; Pierce, 2005)



Social pressure and acceptance into a social group are factors that influence adolescents to begin smoking.

Penny Tweedie/Getty Images

examined the influence that movies have on young adolescents and found that viewing their favorite movie stars smoking on film has an impact on these teens. In a longitudinal study with a representative sample of adolescents in the United States (Wills et al., 2008) and in a study that used a representative sample of middle and high school students (Fulmer et al., 2015), viewing smoking in movies appeared to influence positive attitudes about smoking and prompted affiliating with friends who smoked and believing that smoking is common among peers. Social media represent another media outlet that increases exposure to tobacco messages and pushes young people toward tobacco use (Depue et al., 2015). A systematic review of media influence on smoking (Nunez-Smith et al., 2010) found a strong association between media exposure and smoking.

The influence of smoking in movies extends to young people in countries other than the United States (although the movies that portray smoking are mostly from the United States). In a study of German children between ages 10 and 17 (Hanewinkel & Sargent, 2007), viewing movies with portrayals of smoking influenced the initiation and continuation of smoking. Thus, the social environment provides many sources that may influence young people to smoke or to decline; advertising is also a part of that environment.

Advertising In addition to social pressure, tobacco companies have used advertising as a means of getting teenagers interested in smoking. John Pierce and associates (Pierce et al., 2005) studied how adolescents may become susceptible to advertising by dividing

12-to-15-year-old adolescents who had never smoked into two groups: committed never-smokers who showed no interest in smoking and susceptible never-smokers who reported some interest in smoking. An important difference between the two groups was curiosity. Committed never-smokers who lacked curiosity tended to pay little attention to tobacco ads and were unlikely to begin smoking. Thus, curiosity may be a critical ingredient in adolescents' decision to smoke or not to smoke. Advertising that arouses curiosity can be an effective means of marketing any product, including cigarettes.

Several longitudinal studies and a systematic review indicate that advertising boosts smoking, especially among young people. One longitudinal study (Henriksen et al., 2010) focused on the influence of cigarette advertising in stores and found that adolescents who often visited stores with prominent cigarette advertising were significantly more likely to begin smoking than adolescents who visited such stores less often. Another longitudinal study (Gilpin et al., 2007) showed that adolescents who had a favorite cigarette advertisement or were willing to use cigarette promotional items were more likely to be smokers three and six years later. The systematic review (Paynter & Edwards, 2009) evaluated the influence of advertising located where cigarettes are sold and concluded that such advertising not only makes it more likely that young people will begin to smoke but also contributes to more purchases among smokers and to relapses among those who have quit.

If prosmoking advertising is effective, can antismoking advertising be effective as well? Antismoking media campaigns can be effective, but probably not as effective as advertising to promote smoking. A mass media antismoking campaign (Flynn et al., 2010) showed little effect. Another study found that both anti-smoking and prosmoking advertising can be effective, but the antismoking messages were not strong enough to counteract the prosmoking appeals (Weiss et al., 2006). A study from Australia (White et al., 2015) indicated that antismoking advertising can be successful, but both intensity and duration of exposure to the messages are important components. Thus, there are hints that antismoking advertising could be an antidote to tobacco company advertising.

Weight Control Many girls and some boys begin smoking because they believe it will help them control their weight. A longitudinal study with Dutch adolescents (Harakeh et al., 2010) and another with several ethnic groups in the United States (Fulkerson & French,

2003) showed that weight concerns were positively related to smoking initiation. Young women who were dieting reported that they used smoking as a strategy to lose weight (Jenks & Higgs, 2007), including e-cigarettes (Piñeiro et al., 2016).

However, one study suggests that the weight control benefit of smoking is a myth. A longitudinal study on young women with weight concerns (Stice et al., 2015) indicated that smokers gained more weight over a two-year follow-up than nonsmokers.

Why Do People Continue to Smoke? Different people smoke for different reasons, including being addicted to nicotine, receiving positive and negative reinforcement, having an optimistic bias, and fearing weight gain.

Addiction Once people begin to smoke, they quickly become dependent. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 1994) surveyed smokers 10 to 22 years old and found that nearly two-thirds of those who had smoked at least 100 cigarettes during their lifetime reported that “It’s really hard to quit,” but only a small number of those who had smoked fewer than 100 lifetime cigarettes gave this response. In addition, nearly 90% of participants who smoked more than 15 cigarettes a day found quitting to be very hard. These results are consistent with the celebrity former smokers, whose smoking escalated and resulted in addicted smokers who had a great deal of difficulty quitting.

When addicted smokers are restricted to low-nicotine cigarettes, they smoke more cigarettes to compensate for the scarcity of nicotine they receive from smoking. An early study by Stanley Schachter (1980) manipulated the amount of nicotine in cigarettes supplied to heavy, long-duration smokers. The participants smoked 25% more low-nicotine than high-nicotine cigarettes and took more puffs from low-nicotine cigarettes. A more recent study (Strasser et al., 2007) performed a similar manipulation and obtained similar results—smokers compensate when they smoke lower-nicotine cigarettes. These smokers will be willing to smoke bad-tasting cigarettes, whereas smokers who focus on pleasure or relaxation will not (Leventhal & Avis, 1976).

Nicotine addiction, however, does not explain why some people are light smokers and others smoke heavily. That is, if nicotine were the only reason for smoking, then other modes of nicotine delivery should substitute fully for smoking. A variety of nicotine delivery systems exist, including patches, gum, nasal spray, lozenges, and

electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), which means that smokers may receive nicotine in other (less dangerous) ways. However, smokers tend to prefer cigarettes over other delivery systems (Hughes, 2003; Sweeney et al., 2001). Indeed, smokers rated cigarettes with tobacco from which the nicotine has been removed as more satisfying and relaxing than nicotine inhalers (Barrett, 2010). Although nicotine may play a role in the reason people continue to smoke, this research indicates that nicotine addiction is not the entire story of continuing to smoke.

Positive and Negative Reinforcement A second reason why people continue to smoke is that they receive either positive or negative reinforcement, or both. Behaviors are positively reinforced when they are followed immediately by a pleasant or pleasurable event. The smoking habit is strengthened by positive reinforcers such as pleasure from the smell of tobacco smoke, feelings of relaxation, and satisfaction of manual needs.

Negative reinforcement may also account for why some people continue to smoke. Behaviors are negatively reinforced when they are followed immediately by the removal of or lessening of an unpleasant condition. After smokers become addicted, they must continue to smoke to avoid the aversive effects of withdrawal; that is, when addicted smokers begin to feel tense, anxious, or depressed after not smoking for some period of time, they can remove these unpleasant symptoms by smoking another cigarette.

An experimental study using nicotine and examinations of smokers' motivations are consistent with both types of reinforcement. The experimental study demonstrated that some people who had never smoked found the effects of nicotine reinforcing (when taken in pill form), but others did not (Duke et al., 2015). This finding suggests individual differences in vulnerability to nicotine addiction. Studies with smokers provide additional confirmation. For example, smokers attending a cessation clinic (McEwen et al., 2008) rated relief from stress and boredom as their top two reasons for smoking, which meets the definition of negative reinforcement. Smokers also reported pleasure and enjoyment as reasons for smoking (McEwen et al., 2008), which fit into the category of positive reinforcement.

Optimistic Bias In addition to addiction and reinforcement, many people continue to smoke because

they have an **optimistic bias** that leads them to believe that they personally have a lower risk of disease and death than do other smokers (Weinstein, 1980). For example, when asked about their chances of living to be 75 years old, people who had never smoked and those who were former and light smokers estimated fairly accurately (Schoenbaum, 1997). Heavy smokers, on the other hand, greatly overestimated their chances of living to age 75.

Neil Weinstein (2001) reviewed research on smokers' recognition of their vulnerability to harm and found that smokers showed an optimistic bias. That is, smokers do not perceive that they are at the same level of risk as other smokers. Indeed, smokers acknowledged the risk of cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, and emphysema that accompanies smoking (Waltenbaugh & Zagummy, 2004) but applied that risk to other smokers more than to themselves. Also, smokers in four countries showed an optimistic bias by rating the brand of cigarettes that they smoked as less likely to cause disease than other brands (Mutti et al., 2011). Thus, smokers tend to maintain an optimistic bias concerning their vulnerability to smoking-related dangers, which contributes to their continued smoking.

Fear of Weight Gain Although adolescents use smoking as a means to control their weight, they are not the only age group using this strategy. Adults, too, often continue to smoke for fear of weight gain. Recall that this belief is incorrect—smokers tend to gain more weight than nonsmokers (Stice et al., 2015), but people believe that it is true and behave accordingly.

Concern about weight gain extends to a wide range of smokers, but concern varies with age, gender, and ethnicity. Weight control is a factor that influences some young people to begin smoking (Harakeh et al., 2010), and this concern continues during young adulthood (Koval et al., 2008). In addition, weight concern plays a role in adults' choice to continue smoking (Sánchez-Johnsen et al., 2011).

Gender is a strong predictor of who uses smoking for weight control. For example, college-age women with body image problems were more likely to be smokers than women without such body image problems (Stickney & Black, 2008). A study of African American and White American women and men (Sánchez-Johnsen et al., 2011) revealed weight concern as a factor in continuing to smoke for all groups, but women (and especially White women) were more concerned than men of either ethnicity. A study of

women with strong weight concerns (King et al., 2007) indicated that such women were much more likely to smoke (37.5%) compared with women with lesser weight concerns (22%). Should women with high weight concerns quit smoking, their concerns may increase; normal-weight women who were ex-smokers expressed higher concerns over their weight than normal-weight women who had never smoked (Pisinger & Jorgensen, 2007). These results point to a factor of weight concern, which some people attempt to manage through smoking and to whom quitting presents a threat.

IN SUMMARY

The rate of smoking in the United States has declined dramatically since the mid-1960s, when 42% of adults in the United States were smokers. Presently, that rate is 14.6%. Ethnic background is a factor in smoking for both adolescents and adults; Native Americans have the highest smoking rate, followed by African Americans, European Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans. Currently, educational level is a better predictor of smoking status than gender, with highly educated people smoking at a much lower rate than those with less education.

Reasons for smoking can be divided into questions concerning why people begin to smoke and why they continue to smoke. Most smokers begin as teenagers, at a time when they are very vulnerable to peer pressure. Genetics may play a role in beginning to smoke, but social factors such as friends, siblings, and parents who smoke; advertising; and weight concerns also influence smoking initiation. The question about why people continue is a complex one because people smoke for a variety of reasons. Nearly every smoker in the United States is familiar with the potential dangers of smoking, but many do not relate those hazards to themselves; that is, their knowledge of the dangers of smoking is influenced by an optimistic bias. For many people, smoking reduces stress, anxiety, and depression and therefore provides negative reinforcement. Some people smoke because they are addicted to the nicotine in tobacco products; others continue to smoke because they are concerned about weight gain.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Build two demographic profiles: one of a young teenager who is unlikely to begin to smoke and another of a 35-year-old who has been smoking since age 14. For each, fill in personal information, including gender, family factors, social factors, and other information that is relevant to smoking status.

12-4 Health Consequences of Tobacco Use

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 12-7** Describe the risks of smoking for cancers, cardiovascular disease, and lower respiratory disease
- 12-8** Contrast the health risks of different forms of tobacco use, including smoking cigarettes, smoking pipes or cigars, e-cigarette use, passive smoking, and smokeless tobacco use

Tobacco use is responsible for more than 480,000 deaths yearly in the United States, or more than 1,315 deaths a day (Creamer et al., 2019), and almost 8 million per year worldwide (WHO, 2019b). All forms of tobacco use have health consequences, but smoking cigarettes is the most common and thus the most hazardous. Those hazards include cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, and a variety of other disorders.

Cigarette Smoking

Cigarette smoking is the single deadliest behavior in the history of the United States (and possibly the world), and it is the largest preventable cause of death and disability (Creamer et al., 2019). In Chapter 2, we discussed how scientists have found evidence to support the criteria for establishing a cause-and-effect relationship between smoking and several diseases, even though experimental research is not possible with human participants. Evidence for the harmful effects of tobacco use began to emerge as early as the 1930s, and by the 1950s, the relationship between cigarette smoking and

cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic lower respiratory disease was well established (USDHHS, 2014). These diseases account for three of the four leading causes of death in the United States (Xu et al., 2020), and cigarette smoking contributes to those three.

Smoking and Cancer Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States but the leading cause of smoking-related deaths. Smoking plays a role in the development of a long list of cancers, especially lung cancer. Sufficient evidence exists to conclude that smoking is a causal factor in cancers of the lip, pharynx, esophagus, pancreas, larynx, trachea, urinary bladder, kidney, cervix, and stomach (USDHHS, 2014). Both female and male smokers have an extremely elevated risk of dying from cancer, with men's relative risk being about 23.3 times that of nonsmokers. This risk is the strongest link established to date between any behavior and a major cause of death. Both Walt Disney and R. J. Reynolds, Sr., died of smoking-related cancers.

From 1950 to 1989, lung cancer deaths rose sharply, a trend that lagged about 20 to 25 years behind the rapid rise in cigarette consumption. During the mid-1960s, cigarette consumption began to drop sharply, and then about 25 to 30 years later, lung cancer deaths among men began to decline. Figure 10.5 (see Chapter 10) shows the close tracking of men's and women's deaths from lung cancer and the rise and fall of cigarette consumption in the United States. This is strong circumstantial evidence for a causal link between smoking and lung cancer.

Could other factors, including environmental pollutants, be responsible for the rapid rise in lung cancer deaths before 1990? Evidence from a prospective study (Thun et al., 1995) strongly suggested that neither pollution nor any other nonsmoking factor was responsible for the increase in lung cancer deaths from 1959 to 1988. Other evidence against smoking shows that lung cancer deaths for smokers rose significantly during this period, whereas lung cancer deaths among nonsmokers remained about the same (USDHHS, 1990), thus indoor/outdoor pollution, radon, and other suspected carcinogens had little effect on increases in lung cancer mortality. These results, along with those from earlier epidemiological studies, strongly suggest that cigarette smoking is the primary contributor to lung cancer deaths.

Smoking and Cardiovascular Disease Cardiovascular disease (including both heart disease and stroke) is the leading cause of death in the United States and

many other countries. Until the mid-1990s, the largest number of smoking-related deaths resulted from cardiovascular disease, but these deaths declined, whereas those from cancer have not declined so rapidly. Now, CVD is the second-largest cause of tobacco-related deaths. Novelist Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond, died of a heart attack after years of smoking.

What is the level of risk for cardiovascular disease among people who smoke? In general, research suggests that the risk is about doubled (USDHHS, 2014). The risk is slightly higher for men than for women, but both have a significantly increased chance of both fatal and nonfatal heart attack and stroke.

What biological mechanism might explain the association between smoking and cardiovascular disease? Smoking damages the inner wall of arteries and speeds the formation of plaque within the arteries (USDHHS, 2014). Smoking is also related to formation of blood clots along the walls of arteries, which is a dangerous complication to artery damage. In addition, smoking is related to inflammation not only in the lungs but also within the entire body; growing evidence implicates the role of inflammation in the development of artery disease. Smoking has also been implicated in harmful changes in lipid metabolism, which links smoking to unfavorable cholesterol levels. Smoking also decreases the availability of oxygen to the heart muscle while at the same time increasing demand for oxygen by the heart. Nicotine itself has been implicated, and carbon monoxide is also a suspect. Thus, smoking produces a variety of physiological reactions that increase the risks for CVD.

Smoking and Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease Chronic lower respiratory disease includes several respiratory and lung diseases; the two most deadly are emphysema and chronic bronchitis. These diseases are relatively rare among nonsmokers; most of those who develop the disorder have experienced exposure to passive smoking from a spouse who smokes. R. J. Reynolds, Jr., and R. J. Reynolds III both died of emphysema, one of the chronic lower respiratory diseases.

In summary, three of the four leading causes of death in the United States are related to smoking. The U.S. Public Health Service has estimated that about half of all cigarette smokers eventually die from their habit (American Cancer Society, 2020).

Other Effects of Smoking In addition to cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic lower respiratory

disease, smoking is linked to a number of other problems. For example, over 600 people die each year in the United States from fires begun by cigarettes (USDHHS, 2014). In England, cigarettes and materials related to smoking (such as lighters) were the most common cause of fire fatalities for both adults and children (Mulvaney et al., 2009). Drinking alcohol interacts with smoking cigarettes to magnify the risk of fires and burns, but of course, smoking by itself contributes more to those fires than drinking by itself.

Smoking also relates to diseases of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, pancreas, kidney, bladder, and cervix (USDHHS, 2014). Smokers also have more than their share of periodontal disease (Bánóczy & Squier, 2004) and increased risk of multiple sclerosis

(Hernán et al., 2005). These effects may be related to the effects that smoking has on inflammation and changes in immune system function (Andersson et al., 2019). Smoking is also related to diminished physical strength, poorer balance, impaired neuromuscular performance (Nelson et al., 1994), and motor vehicle crashes (Pederson et al., 2019). Smokers are also more likely than nonsmokers to commit suicide (Miller et al., 2000), to develop acute respiratory disease such as pneumonia (USDHHS, 2014), to experience problems with cognitive functioning (Sabia et al., 2008), and to suffer from macular degeneration (Jager et al., 2008). Smoking also has a relationship to a variety of mental illnesses (see the Would You Believe . . . ? box).

Would You BELIEVE...?

Smoking Is Related to Mental Illness

Most people know that smoking is a risk for a variety of physical illnesses, but smoking is also related to mental illness. In the United States, Great Britain, and Australia, smoking studies have found that smoking was two to three times more common among those diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder than those without any psychiatric disorder (Prochaska et al., 2017).

The increased risk applies to a number of diagnoses, and the more serious disorders are more strongly associated with smoking. People with phobic disorders (a relatively minor type of mental disorder) are about twice as likely to smoke, but those who with schizophrenia (a very serious mental disorder) are about five times more likely to be smokers (Prochaska et al., 2017). People who are depressed also have elevated smoking rates (Strong et al., 2010) as do individuals with personality disorders (Zvolensky et al., 2011). Nor does the relationship between smoking

and mental illness begin during adulthood; it appears during adolescence (Lawrence et al., 2010). As the severity of the mental illness increases, so does the smoking rate (Dixon et al., 2007). In addition, people with a diagnosis of multiple mental disorders have increased chances of being heavy smokers (Prochaska et al., 2017).

Being a heavy smoker creates severe nicotine dependence, which means that people with serious mental disorders experience an increased risk of health problems, but they also encounter even more than the typical difficulties in quitting (Tsoi, Porwal, & Webster, 2010). One possibility for the problems in quitting comes from medications prescribed for people with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, which affect brain chemistry, perhaps in ways that influence nicotine receptors in the brain (Action on Smoking and Health, 2016). Another possibility is that people with mental illnesses use smoking as a form of

self-medication to help them cope with their disorder, but research indicates that smoking worsens or perhaps even precipitates mental disorders (Prochaska et al., 2017). However, the social environment and circumstances of those with mental disorders may encourage and support continued smoking rather than quitting. Recall that lower educational level and poverty are related to smoking, and those risk factors are common among people with mental disorders.

Despite the barriers, some people with serious mental disorders manage to quit (Dickerson et al., 2011). Indeed, those who are hospitalized for treatment of their mental disorder express an interest in quitting at rates similar to other smokers (Prochaska et al., 2017). Those who quit also experience a decrease in the severity of their symptoms, which makes cessation an especially urgent issue for smokers with mental disorders.

Women who smoke experience risks specific to their gender. Some research (Kiyohara & Ohno, 2010) has indicated that female smokers may be more vulnerable to lung cancer than male smokers. Smoking at least one pack of cigarettes a day places women at double the risk for cardiovascular disease and a tenfold risk of dying from chronic lower respiratory disease. Female smokers have an increased risk of fertility problems, miscarriages, preterm delivery, birth defects, and low-birth-weight infants (USDHHS, 2014). Pregnant women who smoke double their chances of delivering a stillborn infant, and they almost triple their risk of having an infant who dies during the first year of life (Dietz et al., 2010). Children and adolescents who smoke have slower growth of lung function and begin to lose lung function at earlier ages than those who do not smoke (USDHHS, 2014).

Male smokers also experience some specific risks from their habit. Smoking not only may make men look older and less attractive (Ernster et al., 1995) but it also increases their chances of experiencing erectile dysfunction and lowers sperm count (USDHHS, 2014). Prince Harry gave up smoking at the urging of Meghan Markle (Brichard, 2018); both were anxious to start a family and heeded the information about sperm counts.

In any given year, at least 14% of smokers and former smokers will experience a chronic disease (Kahende et al., 2007), and cigarette smoking is the cause of about 30% of all cancer deaths (American Cancer Society, 2020). The negative effects are not limited to individual smokers. Society, too, pays a price. Both treatments for smoking-related illnesses and work productivity losses cost the people of the United States billions of dollars annually (American Cancer Society, 2020). These costs, of course, are not limited to smokers—they affect everyone who pays health insurance premiums and everyone who pays for lost worker productivity. Smokers obviously cannot legitimately argue that their smoking habit affects only themselves—their habit costs society as well as individual smokers.

Cigar and Pipe Smoking

Are other forms of tobacco use, such as cigar and pipe smoking, as hazardous as cigarette smoking? People from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States expressed the opinion that smoking cigars or pipes is less hazardous than smoking cigarettes (O'Connor et al., 2007). Although the tobacco used in pipes and cigars differs somewhat from the tobacco used to

make cigarettes, pipe and cigar tobacco is similarly carcinogenic.

Whereas male, cigarette-only smokers have a risk for lung cancer of about 23 times that of nonsmokers, cigar and pipe smokers' risk is elevated only about five times that of nonsmokers (Henley et al., 2004). Thus, the beliefs of lower risk for cigar and pipe smokers are correct. However, cigar and pipe smokers experience reduced lung function and increased airflow obstruction (Rodriguez et al., 2010) but not as drastic a reduction in life expectancy—4.7 years lost for cigar or pipe smokers versus 8.8 for heavy cigarette smokers (Streppel et al., 2007). However, cigar and pipe smokers die from heart disease, chronic lower respiratory disease, and a variety of cancers, just as cigarette smokers do. These findings suggest that cigar and pipe smoking may be less hazardous than cigarettes, but they are not safe.

The dangers of pipe smoking are of increasing concern with the increasing popularity of water pipes (hookahs) (Gentzke et al., 2019; Maziak, 2011). This practice has been common in the Middle East among adults, but within the past two decades, its popularity has spread around the world. The practice has become especially popular among young people. In the United States, students in high school expressed curiosity about hookah use, especially those students who had some experience with tobacco use (Gentzke et al., 2019). Authorities are concerned that this trend may lead to more widespread tobacco use among young people, but the spreading popularity of electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) has proven to be an even more distressing trend.

E-cigarettes

Electronic cigarettes, or **e-cigarettes**, are electronic devices that use a heating element to vaporize a liquid mixture, which users inhale (Chang & Barry, 2015). Some of the available liquids contain nicotine; this version of e-cigarette use is similar to smoking cigarettes, minus the other components of tobacco. Proponents of e-cigarettes have argued that they provide a way to stop smoking cigarettes or offer a safer alternative to smoking cigarettes. Detractors argue that e-cigarettes provide increased opportunities to become addicted to nicotine. Detractors feared that this nicotine delivery method would make nicotine use more acceptable, spurring a boom in worldwide use (Sinniah & Khoo, 2015). Recent research (Glantz & Bareham, 2018) indicates that the detractors' fears were warranted.

Both adolescents (Kann et al., 2018) and adults (Pepper et al., 2015) consider e-cigarettes safer than cigarettes. These attitudes are part of the allure of vaping, advertising began to focus on these benefits, the vaping market increased, and adolescents began to use e-cigarette in large numbers. For example, more than 40% of high school students in the United States have tried vaping (Kann et al., 2018). Unfortunately, e-cigarette use increases the risk of using tobacco products (Zhong et al., 2016). Many adolescents as well as many adults combine e-cigarette use with tobacco (Glantz & Bareham, 2018). Thus, e-cigarettes do not prevent cigarette smoking and may be a gateway to tobacco use for young people.

Although inhaling nicotine vapor should be safer than inhaling tobacco smoke, hazards still exist. E-cigarettes aerosolize the liquid mixture, creating very fine particles that enter deep into the lungs (Glantz & Bareham, 2018). These particles include not only formaldehyde and other carcinogenic chemicals but also non-carcinogenic toxins. Thus, e-cigarette use is not free of cancer risk, but other risks to the respiratory system are also possible, including dangers to the airway and lungs (Fromme & Schober, 2015). Vaping also increases risks for cardiovascular disease and increases inflammation (Glantz & Bareham, 2018), which has been linked to a variety of diseases and disorders. Even without nicotine, vaping presents risks.

E-cigarette use has not demonstrated clear effectiveness as a way to stop smoking cigarettes. Some smokers and some cessation interventions have used e-cigarettes as a way quit smoking (Glantz & Bareham, 2018), but research has shown that users are less likely to quit cigarettes than smokers who only smoke cigarettes (Al-Delaimy et al., 2015; Glantz & Bareham, 2018). The combination of these findings suggests that some of the gains in lowering tobacco use may be lost due to the combination of acceptance, use, and resistance to quitting among e-cigarette users. Thus, e-cigarettes have increased and prolonged cigarette smoking rather than offering an effective, safe way to quit.

Passive Smoking

Many nonsmokers find the smoke of others to be a nuisance and even irritating to their eyes and nose. This annoying exposure still occurs, but laws that mandate smoke-free buildings, open spaces, and workplaces have decreased the number of people exposed to others'

smoke. A survey of workplace exposure (King et al., 2014) found that about 20% of participants reported that they had been exposed to secondhand smoke within the week before the survey. However, over 80% believe that they should never have that experience.

But is **passive smoking**, also known as **environmental tobacco smoke (ETS)** or secondhand smoke more than annoying—is it harmful to the health of non-smokers? In the 1980s, some evidence began to accrue that passive smoking might be a health hazard. Specifically, secondhand smoke has been linked to several cancers, heart disease, and a variety of respiratory problems in children. In addition, the residue left behind from secondhand smoke, which is called *thirdhand smoke*, also poses health hazards by staying in the environment and interacting with other toxins (Northrup et al., 2016).

Passive Smoking and Cancer The effect of passive smoking on lung and other cancers is difficult to determine because of problems in assessing the intensity and duration of exposure. Research has focused on workplace exposure and nonsmokers who live in households with a smoker. In general, the more environmental tobacco smoke people are exposed to and the longer the exposure, the higher the risk for cancer.

People, whose jobs expose them to high levels of smoke, have an increased risk of lung cancer mortality. One review (Siegel & Skeer, 2003) described such jobs cleverly as the “5 B’s”—bars, bowling alleys, billiard halls, betting establishments, and bingo parlors. Longtime employees of these establishments had up to 18 times higher nicotine concentrations than people who worked in restaurants, residences, and offices. A meta-analysis that drew from studies worldwide (Stayner et al., 2007) found that exposed workers showed a 24% increase in lung cancer. A meta-analysis of nonsmokers living in a household with a smoker (Jaynes et al., 2016) indicated a 41% increase in risk for this type of passive smoking and lung cancer. Therefore, evidence from both types of individuals exposed to cigarette smoke show that this exposure increases their risk of cancer.

Passive Smoking and Cardiovascular Disease The effect of environmental exposure to tobacco smoke increases the risk for cancer modestly, but its effects on cardiovascular disease are substantial. Exposure to smoke prompts some of the same physiological reactions as smoking—inflammation, formation of blood

clots, and changes to the lining of arteries—which increases the risks for heart disease (Venn & Britton, 2007). A meta-analysis showed that the excess risk of heart disease for passive smokers is about 25% (Enstrom & Kabat, 2006), a risk similar to the risk for stroke (Lee & Forey, 2006). However, even this small elevation of risk for heart disease translates into thousands of deaths each year from passive smoking, even though this large number is only about one-tenth of the number of those who die from active smoking.

Passive Smoking and the Health of Children

Infants and young children are not only more likely to be exposed to tobacco smoke but also more vulnerable to the hazards of tobacco smoke than adults (Jayes et al., 2016). The hazards can begin even before babies are born and extend into childhood. For example, smoke exposure increases the risks of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Other health problems for children include decreased lung function, increased risk for chronic lower respiratory disease, increased risk for tuberculosis, and increased risk of triggering asthma attacks. In general, the negative effects of environmental tobacco smoke diminish as children age, but school-age children exposed to passive smoking have more than their share of wheezing, missed school days, and weaker lung function volume.

In summary, passive smoking is a health risk for lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, and many health problems of children. In general, the greater the exposure, the greater is the risk.

Smokeless Tobacco

Smokeless tobacco includes snuff and chewing tobacco, forms of tobacco that were more popular during the 19th century than at present. Currently, European American and Hispanic American male adolescents use smokeless tobacco more than any other segment of the U.S. population (USDHHS, 2014). However, smokeless forms of tobacco use are common among adolescents and young men in other areas of the world, especially in Southeast Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean (WHO, 2019b). Although many of the young people who use smokeless forms of tobacco acknowledge that it carries risks, they tend to believe that it is safer than smoking.

The belief that smokeless tobacco is safer than smoking has been a factor in its increased use throughout North America and parts of Europe. In some sense,

this belief is correct; smokeless tobacco does not carry as high a risk for disease as smoking does (Colilla, 2010; USDHHS, 2014), but tobacco is still a toxin and a carcinogen with health risks. The evidence is not sufficiently strong to support a causal link, but the use of smokeless tobacco is associated with increased mortality from oral, pancreatic, and lung cancer as well as cardiovascular disease. The use of smokeless tobacco as a substitute for smoking is questionable; adolescents who begin to use smokeless tobacco are more likely to begin smoking than those who do not try this form of tobacco (Severson et al., 2007). The risks of using smokeless tobacco are not as great as those associated with smoking cigarettes; nevertheless, chewing tobacco carries some health hazards.

IN SUMMARY

The health consequences of tobacco use are multiple and serious. Smoking is the number one cause of preventable mortality in the world. Smoking causes about 480,000 deaths a year in the United States and 8 million worldwide, mostly from cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic lower respiratory disease. But smoking also carries a risk for nonfatal diseases and disorders such as periodontal disease, loss of physical strength, infertility among women, respiratory disorders, cognitive dysfunction, erectile dysfunction, and macular degeneration.

Many nonsmokers are bothered by the smoking of others, and rightfully so—these nonsmokers experience an increased risk for respiratory disease from passive smoking. Research suggests that environmental tobacco smoke raises the risk for lung cancer but boosts deaths from cardiovascular disease much more. However, children are the most serious victims of passive smoking; their risk for respiratory disorders is increased substantially.

Like cigars and pipes, smokeless tobacco is not as dangerous as cigarette smoking. Teenagers who use smokeless tobacco tend to believe that this form of tobacco is much safer than cigarette smoking. That belief also extends to e-cigarettes, but growing evidence indicates that e-cigarette use also carries dangers, even when no nicotine is involved. Bottom line: No level of smoking or exposure to tobacco is safe.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Evaluate the various types of smoking and tobacco use, ranking those types from least dangerous to most dangerous.

12-5 Interventions for Reducing Smoking Rates

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 12-9** Evaluate the effectiveness of strategies to reduce smoking rates
- 12-10** Compare the effectiveness of pharmacological interventions to behavioral programs aimed at helping smokers quit

Although smoking rates are declining in many high-income nations, smoking rates have increased in middle- and lower-income nations, which will create increases in smoking-related diseases throughout the world. To protect against tobacco-related diseases, the WHO (2019a) has implemented a strategy to cut smoking rates through deterring young people from beginning, encouraging smokers to quit, and making smoking less accessible through restriction of availability and increased costs.

Deterring Smoking

Information alone is not an effective way to change behavior, and this generalization applies to deterring smoking. Nearly every teenager in the United States (and many other parts of the world) knows that smoking is dangerous to health, yet almost 29% of high school students in the United States have tried smoking, almost 9% smoke at least once a month, and 2.6% smoke on most days (Kann et al., 2018).

Choosing to smoke does not occur because children or adolescents lack information about the dangers of tobacco; they receive many messages about the dangers of smoking through antismoking media messages (Weiss et al., 2006), health officials, and concerned parents. By the time adolescents are 14 years old, they pay little attention to health warnings, making such warnings worthless (Siegel & Biener, 2000). Thus, information about the health dangers of smoking does

not create successful prevention programs (Flay, 2009). Deterring smoking is a challenge that requires more than information about the dangers of smoking.

The most common approach to preventing children from beginning to smoke is through school-based programs, which vary in terms of who delivers the anti-smoking message, length of intervention, and age of the target students. The most common program is Project D.A.R.E., which is not only oriented to drug use but also includes tobacco. This intervention includes antidrug messages delivered by police officers, typically once a week for a school semester. Evaluations of this program (West & O'Neal, 2004) have revealed that it is not effective in deterring smoking or other drug use. However, Project D.A.R.E. underwent revisions in its approach (Caputi & McClelland, 2017), adopting elements similar to those in more successful, school-based programs, such as the use of interactive discussions rather than information-only lectures, building students' refusal skills, and eliciting a commitment not to smoke. Other elements of more effective school programs include programs that include at least 15 sessions that stretch into high school, integrating smoking prevention into a comprehensive health education program, and providing prevention messages in the community as well as by parents and through media messages (Flay, 2009).

A systematic review of mass media campaigns aimed at young people (Brinn et al., 2010; Das et al., 2016) indicated that these programs can be effective, and the more media are involved and the longer the messages persist, the more effective the campaign. Unfortunately, the evidence is more impressive for short-term than for long-term effectiveness (Dobbins et al., 2008). Successful prevention must be more comprehensive than school-based programs (CDC, 2014), extending to the community in the form of mass media campaigns, legal efforts to restrict the availability of tobacco, and changes in attitudes toward tobacco use. Deterring children and adolescents from smoking is not an easy task—nor is giving up smoking.

Quitting Smoking

A second method of reducing smoking rates is for current smokers to quit. Although quitting smoking is not easy, millions of people around the world have done so prompted by efforts by individual countries and initiatives by the World Health Organization (2019b). The decreasing rate of smoking among people in the United States has been dramatic. As McLisa Creamer and her

colleagues (Creamer et al., 2019) summarized it, “The approximate two thirds decline in adult cigarette smoking prevalence that has occurred since 1965 represents a major public health success” (p. 1015). There are now more former smokers in the United States than there are current smokers—about 22% are former smokers and about 14% are current cigarette smokers (Creamer et al., 2019). Figure 12.4 indicates that the decline in smoking rates is due not only to fewer people starting to smoke but also to more people quitting.

Nevertheless, many barriers to quitting exist. One barrier is nicotine addiction. In a study that asked people who both smoked and drank alcohol which would be the more difficult to quit, the majority reported that cigarettes would be more difficult to quit (Kozlowski et al., 1989). Despite the difficulties of quitting, smokers have been successful by quitting on their own, whereas others have done so with the assistance of pharmacological approaches, behavioral interventions, and community-wide antismoking campaigns.

Quitting Without Therapy Most people who quit smoking have done so on their own, without the aid of formal cessation programs. In the United States, about 50% of smokers try to quit each year, and about 60% of those people used no cessation treatment (Babb et al., 2017). Who are the smokers most likely to quit on their own?

In an early study on unaided quitting, Stanley Schachter (1982) surveyed two populations: the psychology department at Columbia University and the resident population of Amaganset, New York. Schachter found a success rate of more than 60% for both groups, with an average abstinence length of more than seven years. This rate is much higher than the quit rate from clinic studies. Schachter interpreted the high success rate, even for heavy smokers, as evidence that quitting may be easier than the clinic evaluations indicate. He suggested that people who attend clinic programs are, for the most part, those who have failed in attempting to quit on their own. Later research on the use of smoking cessation treatment confirmed this reasoning (Shiffman et al., 2008). Thus, people who attend clinics are often self-selected on the basis of previous failure, plus a continuing motivation to quit. Quitting on one’s own is possible, but many smokers need assistance.

Using Pharmacological Approaches President Obama used nicotine gum, one type of pharmacological approach, when he was trying to quit during his



Nicotine replacement can help smokers with symptoms of withdrawal, but the effectiveness is higher when combined with behavioral techniques.

Image Point Fr/Shutterstock.com

first presidential campaign (“Michelle Obama,” 2011). Indeed, campaign aides kept a supply of nicotine gum with them to help Obama refrain from smoking, and his physician advised him to continue to use this strategy in his efforts to quit. Several types of drugs have demonstrated some effectiveness in helping people stop smoking. One approach is nicotine replacement, which is available through patches, gum, lozenges, inhalers, and nasal sprays. In addition, the drugs varenicline (Chantix and Champix) and bupropion (Zyban) have U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval for smoking cessation. All of those approaches have contributed to the decreasing smoking rate.

Nicotine replacement works by releasing small doses of nicotine into the body, allowing smokers work toward weaning themselves from smoking until they are no longer dependent on nicotine. A systematic review of meta-analyses of drugs for smoking cessation (Cahill et al., 2013; Ghamri, 2018) indicated that nicotine replacement was effective in promoting cessation, so are varenicline and bupropion. Like all drug treatments, these pharmacological treatments have side effects, most of which are not serious. Indeed, most of the side effects are substantially less dangerous than continuing to smoke. Unfortunately, the same positive results may not occur for adolescent smokers using one of these pharmacological approaches. A meta-analysis (Kim et al., 2011) found no significant effect for these approaches for adolescents. Adding other components may boost the effectiveness of all pharmacological interventions for adults, and adolescents may require some other approach to quit smoking.

Receiving a Behavioral Intervention Behavioral approaches aimed at smoking cessation typically include a combination of strategies, such as behavior modification, cognitive behavioral approaches, contracts made by smoker and therapist in which the smoker agrees to stop smoking, group therapy, social support, relaxation training, stress management, “booster” sessions to prevent relapse, and other components.

Both individual and group counseling can be successful in helping some people quit smoking. Psychologists, physicians, and nurses can be effective providers, but effectiveness is positively related to the amount of contact between client and therapist. For example, receiving advice from a physician to quit produces an increase in cessation (Stead et al., 2008), but information about the dangers of smoking is not as effective as advice that prepares smokers to quit (Gemmell & DiClemente, 2009). Face-to-face contact is not necessary for a program to be successful. Every year, millions of people in the United States seek information about quitting by contacting online sources (Graham & Amato, 2019). Such assistance may come through computer-based or web-based formats (Myung et al., 2009), and text messaging can be effective in helping people quit and preventing relapse (Sampson et al., 2015).

Programs that include more sessions tend to be more effective than programs with fewer sessions. For example, counseling and behavioral programs of smoking cessation are successful for individuals who have experienced heart attacks when these programs are of sufficient duration (Barth et al., 2008). Also, smokers who seek treatment from programs that specialize in smoking tend to be more successful than those who receive programs from providers who offer other types of services in addition to smoking cessation (Song et al., 2016). The most effective programs include both a counseling component and a pharmacological component. Each of these elements is effective, and the combination of the two improves outcomes (Ghamri, 2018; Hughes, 2009; Stead et al., 2008).

Decreasing Smoking Through Community Campaigns Rather than targeting individuals, an alternative strategy involves campaigns that cover entire communities. Such health campaigns are not new. More than two centuries before anyone campaigned against the dangers of cigarette smoking, Cotton Mather used pamphlets and oratory to persuade the people of Boston to accept smallpox inoculations (Faden, 1987). Today, community programs exist throughout the world, a

growing number of which have the goal of creating smoke-free environments (WHO, 2019a).

Such campaigns are typically sponsored by government agencies, charitable foundations, or large corporations as an intervention designed to improve the health of large numbers of people. Interventions at the workplace level formulate and enforce a smoke-free workplace as well as encourage workers to stop smoking, often by offering cessation programs and monetary or benefits incentives. A systematic review of studies on smoke-free workplaces (Fichtenberg & Glantz, 2002) indicated that this strategy not only reduces the number of cigarettes that workers smoke but also decreases the prevalence of smoking.

Another type of community intervention involves media campaigns that not only attempt to make smoking less desirable but also offer contact information to helplines, telephone- or website-based centers that offer smokers information and assistance in beginning a cessation program. One such program is the Tips From Former Smokers campaign, initiated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This program included an extensive television campaign that offered stories from former smokers who had experienced serious health consequences combined with messages about quitting and access to free help. Research indicates that this media campaign has been successful (McAfee et al., 2017) and also that more extensive exposure to the messages were increasingly effective in increasing quit attempts.

Yet another community or national strategy to decrease smoking is raising the price of cigarettes, which affects smokers' willingness to purchase cigarettes. This approach has been effective in countries throughout the world (WHO, 2019a).

The percentage of people who change behavior because of a community or media health campaign may be quite small, but if the message reaches thousands of people, then the approach results in a large number of people who quit. In addition, such campaigns have the ability to alter the acceptability of smoking, which is an important factor in decreasing smoking rates (WHO, 2019a). Thus, attempting to reach large numbers of people through media campaigns can be a successful strategy.

Who Quits and Who Does Not?

Who is successful at quitting, and who is not? Investigators have examined several factors that may answer this

question, including age, gender, educational level, quitting other drugs, and weight concern (which we discuss in a later section). Age shows a relation to quitting. In general, younger smokers, especially those who smoke at a high level, are more likely to continue smoking than older smokers (Ferguson et al., 2005; Hagimoto et al., 2010).

Are men more likely than women to quit smoking? More men have quit smoking than women, but historically, smoking rates for men have been higher, resulting in a larger group of male smokers (USDHHS, 2014). However, some evidence is consistent with the hypothesis that women find quitting more difficult (Torchalla et al., 2011), possibly because female smokers who try to quit have more obstacles to overcome. For example, women are not as likely as men to use pharmacological treatments in their quit attempts; for those who do, the quit rates are similar to those of men (Smith et al., 2015). The use of pharmacological treatments tends to decrease the severity of symptoms of withdrawal, and people who experience severe symptoms tend to be less successful at quitting. In addition, women tend to use smoking to manage stress, anxiety, and depression, to which they are more vulnerable. Losing a coping strategy presents difficulties, and people who use smoking as a coping strategy are less likely to quit than those who smoke for pleasure (Ferguson et al., 2005). In addition, those who live with a smoker are less likely to quit, which may affect women more than men.

Women are also less likely to receive social support for quitting, and a supportive social network is helpful in quitting. Unfortunately, only about 24% of smokers in the United States who tried to quit reported that they experienced social support (Shiffman et al., 2008). In a study of couples in which both smoked (Lüscher, & Scholz, 2017), provision of support helped both partners quit, but male partners benefitted more than female partners.

Does the lower rate of smokers among those with higher levels of education apply to quitting as well? Research that drew participants from 18 European countries (Schaap et al., 2008) suggested an affirmative answer. In this comparison across countries, more highly educated smokers were more likely to quit, including both women and men in all age groups. A longitudinal study of high school smokers also suggested that smokers were less likely to pursue higher education than nonsmokers (Sabado et al., 2017).

Finally, do smokers who abuse alcohol and other drugs find it harder to give up cigarettes? Those who

work in addictions treatment have long recognized the strong relationship between smoking and drinking, and the dominant view for many years was that addressing drinking problems was more urgent than smoking cessation for people who used both substances. That belief has been reevaluated; the dangers of smoking are recognized as important to address in treatment. In addition, research (Nieva et al., 2011) indicates that people are capable of quitting both smoking and drinking simultaneously. However, people with substance abuse problems are more likely to relapse into smoking than those without additional substance use issues (Quisenberry et al., 2019).

Relapse Prevention

The problem of relapse is not unique to smoking. Relapse rates are quite similar among people who have quit smoking, given up alcohol, and stopped using heroin (Hunt et al., 1971). For those who endeavor to quit, some do succeed in quitting or cutting down, but 22% go back to smoking at a higher rate than before their quit attempt (Yong et al., 2008).

The high rate of relapse after smoking cessation treatment prompted G. Alan Marlatt and Judith Gordon (1980) to examine the relapse process itself. For some people who have been successful in quitting, one cigarette precipitates a full relapse, complete with feelings of total failure. Marlatt and Gordon termed this phenomenon the *abstinence violation effect*. They incorporated strategies into their treatment to cope with former smokers' despair when they violate their intention to remain abstinent. By training clients that one "slip" does not constitute a relapse, Marlatt and Gordon's technique attempts to buffer them against a full-blown relapse. Slips are common even among people who will eventually quit (Yong et al., 2008). Thus, a single slip should not discourage people from continuing their efforts to stop smoking.

Self-quitters have very high relapse rates; as many as two-thirds of smokers who quit on their own relapse after only two days (Hughes et al., 1992), and as many as 75% resume smoking within six months (Ferguson et al., 2005). A systematic review of relapse prevention (Agboola et al., 2010) indicated that self-help materials were effective in fighting relapse after a year for these former smokers.

Behavioral relapse prevention techniques are most effective in the short term, between one and three months after quitting (Agboola et al., 2010), but

this time is when former smokers are more vulnerable to the stress and cravings that are important in prompting relapse (McKee et al., 2011). Pharmacological treatment, especially the use of varenicline, can be effective in preventing relapse within the important first year after quitting (Livingstone-Banks et al., 2019). Relapse rates decline after one year of abstinence (Herd et al., 2009), so former smokers may not be in great need of assistance past that time.

However, the high relapse rate within that year remains a problem. The concept of *cessation fatigue* is the notion that quitting smoking presents so many added stressors that those who have quit smoking become overwhelmed and relapse (Heckman et al., 2018). Longitudinal research (Heckman et al., 2019) revealed that the emotional exhaustion component of cessation fatigue is a predictor of relapse. This finding combined with other research that focused on negative emotionality as factor in relapse prevention (Olsson et al., 2016) points to the importance of addressing psychological components of relapse and tailoring relapse prevention to include these components. Thus, different intensity of approaches may be an important at different times after smokers have quit, and researchers must work toward understanding both smoker and treatment characteristics to develop more effective ways to prevent the common problem of relapse.

IN SUMMARY

Smoking rates can be reduced either by prevention or by quitting. Providing young people with information on the dangers of smoking is not an effective strategy, and many of the school-based prevention programs have limited effects. Some of the programs are more effective when they are interactive, teach social skills to refuse smoking, and are well integrated into the school health curriculum and the wider community. Such programs are more effective than simpler, more limited programs.

How can people quit smoking? Most people who attempt to quit do so without seeking any type of program for help, but pharmacological treatments and behavioral interventions can be effective, especially when combined. Because giving up nicotine may result in withdrawal symptoms, many successful cessation programs include some form of nicotine replacement, such as a patch

or gum, or one of the drugs that affects the brain chemistry involved in smoking. Both types are more effective than a placebo or no treatment, and so are several drugs and behavioral programs. Another approach to reducing smoking rates involves large-scale community programs, which usually include anti-tobacco mass media or workplace campaigns and also policies to limit access to cigarettes. If even a small percentage of people exposed to such campaigns stop smoking, this change can translate into thousands of people giving up tobacco.

Women face more barriers to quitting than men, but recent studies have indicated similar quit rates. Well-educated people are also more likely to quit than less educated ones. Many people can quit for months, but the problem of relapse remains a challenge. Programs aimed at relapse prevention have not demonstrated the degree of success that is needed; relapse remains a serious problem for those who quit smoking.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. One way to reduce smoking rates is to prevent people from beginning to smoke. Write down the major barriers to reducing smoking rates through prevention of initiation.
2. Your friend has been smoking for eight years and has made several attempts to quit, all of which have been unsuccessful. Provide your friend with three strategies that research has indicated as effective in helping people quit and warn your friend about some strategies that do not have good research support as effective.

12-6 Effects of Quitting

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 12-11** Compare the health impact of the risk of weight gain after quitting to the health benefits of quitting
- 12-12** List four health benefits to smokers who quit

When smokers quit, they experience a number of effects, almost all of which are positive. However, one possible negative effect is weight gain.



BECOMING HEALTHIER

1. If you do not smoke, don't start. College students are still susceptible to the pressure to smoke if their friends are smokers. The easiest way to be a nonsmoker is to stay a nonsmoker.

Action Plan: Devise, write down, and practice two refusals that you could use when you are in a situation in which someone offers you tobacco.

2. If you smoke, don't fool yourself into believing that the risks of smoking do not apply to you.

Action Plan: Assess your own optimistic biases regarding smoking by first writing down your estimate of your chances of developing respiratory diseases. Then, look at the statistics on increased chances of respiratory diseases for individuals who smoke, finding statistics for individuals of your age and gender.

3. Understand that cutting down is better than continuing to smoke at a high rate, but you will not receive the health benefits of quitting unless you quit.

Action Plan: Compare the risk of light smoking (less than

10 cigarettes a day) to those of heavy smoking (at least one pack a day) to those of not smoking.

4. If you smoke, try to quit.

Action Plan: Even if you feel that quitting will be difficult, make an attempt to quit. If your first attempt is not successful, try again. Keep trying until you quit. Research indicates that people who keep trying are very likely to succeed.

5. If you have tried to quit on your own and have failed, look for a program to help you. The most effective programs combine some behavioral training with some form of pharmacological treatment.

Action Plan: Examine several programs and make a chart that lists the things about each program that you evaluate as fitting your needs. Use this chart as a guide in selecting a program.

6. When you are trying to quit smoking, find a supportive network of friends and acquaintances to help you stop and to boost your motivation to quit.

Action Plan: Make a list of the people whom you believe will try to sabotage your attempts to quit, the places you believe you should avoid, and the activities that have a high association with smoking.

7. E-cigarettes have been advertised as safe alternatives to cigarettes, but research does not support these advertising claims.

Action Plan: Make a plan that includes strategies to avoid people who are vaping.

8. Even if you do not smoke, remember that no level of tobacco exposure is safe.

Action Plan: Analyze the places that you go frequently, estimating the amount of smoking that occurs in each.

9. If you smoke, do not expose others to your smoke. Remember that young children are especially vulnerable.

Action Plan: Develop strategies to shield others from your smoke.

Quitting and Weight Gain

Many smokers fear weight gain if they give up smoking. This fear applies to men (Clark et al., 2004) as well as women (King et al., 2005), and these fears are justified. Many smokers who quit gain weight (Alonso et al., 2017; Courtemanche et al., 2018). However, smokers who continue to smoke gain more weight than nonsmokers (Stice et al., 2015). Thus, both continuing to smoke and quitting lead to weight gain.

The weight gain associated with quitting may be quite modest, or it may be large. Some people experience increased appetite as a symptom of nicotine withdrawal (John et al., 2006), which leads to eating more. Unfortunately, overweight ex-smokers are more likely to gain a great deal more weight than normal-weight ex-smokers (Lycett et al., 2011). However, weight gain following smoking cessation is often fairly modest—about 6 pounds for women and about 11 for men (Reas et al., 2009) and less for ex-smokers who use one of the

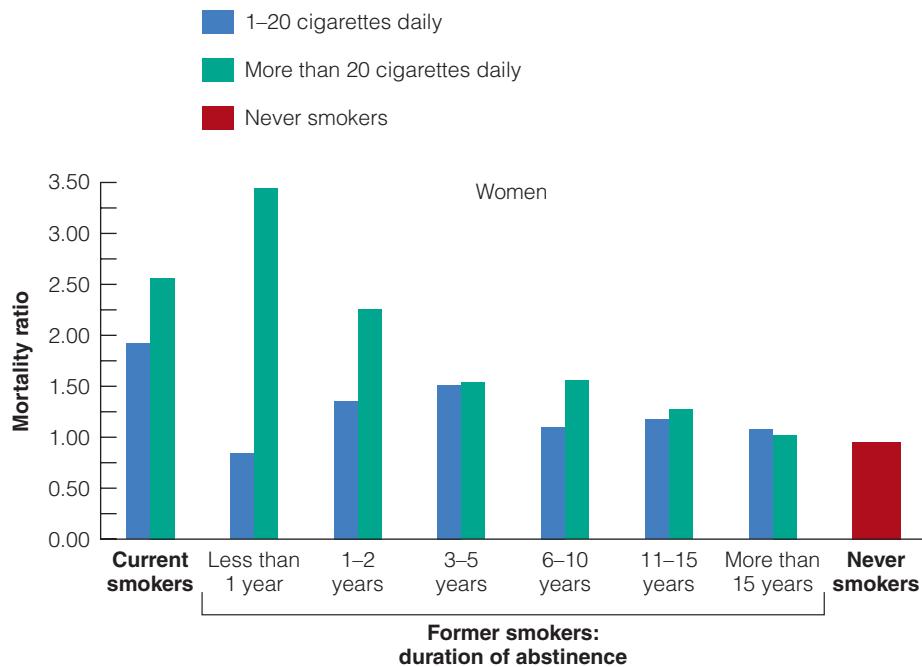


FIGURE 12.7 Overall mortality ratios for female current and former smokers compared with never smokers, by duration of abstinence.

Source: *The health benefits of smoking cessation: A report of the Surgeon General* (p. 78), by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1990, DHHS Publication No. CDC 90-8416, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

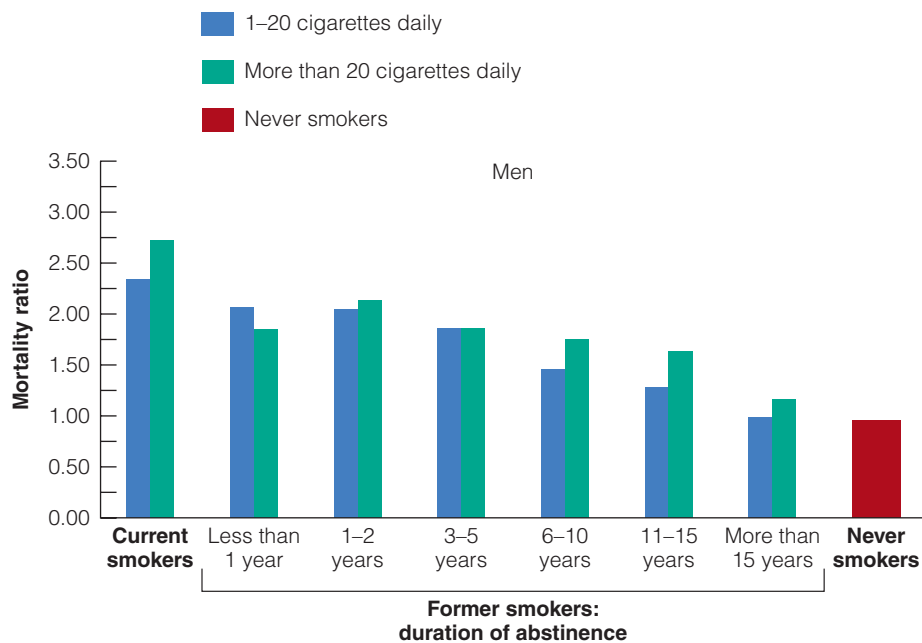


FIGURE 12.8 Overall mortality ratios for male current and former smokers compared with never smokers, by duration of abstinence.

Source: *The health benefits of smoking cessation: A report of the Surgeon General* (p. 78), by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1990, DHHS Publication No. CDC 90-8416, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

drugs that aid in quitting (Courtemanche et al., 2019). In addition, the weight gain appears to have no impact on the risks for heart attack and stroke. That is, no health risks increase with the weight gain. Furthermore, five years after quitting, former smokers' weight is similar to those who never smoked. One barrier to quitting for Jennifer Aniston was fear of weight gain, which happened when she quit (Newswire, 2011). Aniston adopted an exercise program as well as the practice of yoga and lost the weight she gained after quitting (Brichard, 2018). Therefore, quitting was a wise choice for her, as it is for all who do.

Health Benefits of Quitting

Can smokers reduce their all-cause mortality by quitting smoking? An extensive review (Critchley & Capewell, 2003) compared a large group of smokers who continued to smoke with another large group who were able to stop smoking. The result: smokers who quit reduced their all-cause mortality by 36%. This reduction in mortality seems to provide solid evidence that quitting smoking can decrease mortality. To receive these health benefits, however, smokers must quit—not just cut down—the number of cigarettes smoked (Pisinger & Godtfredsen, 2007).

Two important questions for smokers considering quitting are: (1) Can smokers regain some of their life expectancy by quitting, and (2) how long must ex-smokers remain abstinent before they reverse the health risks of smoking? The 1990 report of the Surgeon General (USDHHS, 1990) summarized studies on the health benefits of quitting for different levels and durations of smoking, and researchers in countries around the world have reported similar benefits (World Health Organization, 2019a). The reviews have been consistent: quitting improves a range of risks for health problems produced by smoking. The earlier analysis indicated that former light smokers (fewer than 20 cigarettes a day) who were able to abstain for 16 years had about the same rate of mortality as people who had never smoked. **Figure 12.7** shows that after more than 15 years of abstinence, women's mortality risk decreased substantially. **Figure 12.8** shows that men's mortality risk reduces steadily for up to 16 years.

Longtime smokers who quit reduce their chances of dying from heart disease much more rapidly than they lower their risk of death from lung cancer. The risk of lung cancer remains elevated for 10 years or longer, especially among men. Women also reduce their risks

by quitting, and the younger they are when they quit, the less likely they will be to die of lung cancer (Zhang et al., 2005). Quitting at younger ages also lowers the risk of cardiovascular disease events (Mannan et al., 2011).

These studies suggest that by quitting smoking, both male and female smokers can reduce their risk of cardiovascular disease to that of nonsmokers, although their elevated risk of lung and other cancers declines much more slowly. Thus, never starting to smoke is healthier than quitting, but quitting has health benefits.

How much does quitting matter? For the average male and female smokers who are free of heart disease, eating a diet with no more than 10% of calories from saturated fat would extend their lives somewhere between three days and three months (Grover et al., 1994). By contrast, quitting smoking at age 35 would add seven to eight years to life expectancy. Smokers who quit earlier realize even greater extension of life expectancy, and in addition, smokers who quit also add years of healthy life, not just years of life (Hurley & Matthews, 2007).

IN SUMMARY

Many smokers fear that if they stop smoking, they will gain weight, and they may, but most people do not gain a lot of weight, and smokers who continue to smoke also gain weight. For most smokers, excessive weight they may gain is less risky than continuing to smoke. On a more positive note, stopping smoking improves health and extends life expectancy. Some evidence suggests that 16 years after quitting, former smokers' all-cause mortality rate returns to that of nonsmokers, although they may continue to have an excess risk for cancer mortality.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Your uncle has been a smoker for over 15 years, and after learning about all the dangers of smoking, you are concerned about his health. To convince him to quit, you want to tell him about the benefits of quitting. Write down a list of the benefits that your uncle is likely to experience when he quits.

Questions

This chapter has addressed five basic questions:

1. How does smoking affect the respiratory system?

The respiratory system allows for the intake of oxygen and the elimination of carbon dioxide. Cigarette smoke drawn into the lungs eventually damages the lungs. Chronic bronchitis and emphysema are two chronic pulmonary diseases related to smoking. Tobacco contains several thousand compounds, including nicotine, and smoke exposes smokers to tars and other compounds that contribute to heart disease and cancer.

2. Who chooses to smoke and why?

About 14% of all U.S. adults smoke, more are former smokers than current smokers, and more than half have never smoked. Slightly more men than women smoke, but gender is not as important as educational level as a predictor of smoking—higher education is associated with lower smoking rates. Most smokers start as adolescents, and genes contribute to both initiation and nicotine dependence. Additional influences come from peers, parents, siblings, positive media images, and advertising. Smoking is part of a risk-taking, rebellious style that is consistent with the way some adolescents want to see themselves. No conclusive answer exists for why people continue to smoke, but the addictive properties of nicotine play a role. Smokers may derive positive reinforcement such as relaxation from smoking, or they may receive negative reinforcement from relief of withdrawal symptoms. Other smokers, especially women, may use smoking because they believe that it will help with weight control.

3. What are the health consequences of tobacco use?

Smoking is the number one cause of preventable death in the United States and many other countries, causing about 480,000 deaths a year in the US, mostly from cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic lower respiratory disease. Smoking also carries a risk of nonfatal diseases and disorders such as periodontal disease, loss of physical strength and bone density, respiratory disorders, cognitive dysfunction, erectile dysfunction, and macular degeneration. Passive smoking is a slight

risk for death from cancer but a greater risk for cardiovascular deaths. Environmental tobacco smoke raises young children's risk of respiratory diseases and even death. Cigar or pipe smoking is less risky than cigarette smoking, but these forms of smoking are not safe, nor are e-cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco is probably somewhat safer than cigarette smoking, but the use of smokeless tobacco is associated with increased rates of oral cancer and periodontal disease and may be related to coronary heart disease.

4. How can smoking rates be reduced?

One way to reduce smoking rates is to prevent people from starting. Such programs are often part of school programs, but to be effective, programs must be extensive, build students' refusal skills, and lead them toward a commitment to avoid smoking. Most people who quit smoking do so on their own without any formal cessation program, but relapse is an even bigger problem for these smokers than those who use an effective program to quit. Pharmacological treatment can be effective and includes nicotine replacement or drugs that influence nicotine's effects in the brain. These pharmacological treatments can be a useful component in smoking cessation but even more successful when combined with behavioral interventions. Behavioral treatment can also be effective in helping people quit, especially in the early phase of quitting. Mass media, workplace-, or community-based campaigns that reach thousands of smokers are also successful in helping some smokers quit, especially when they offer information about finding a cessation program and build social attitudes that reject tobacco.

5. What are the effects of quitting?

Many smokers fear weight gain upon quitting, and weight gain is common but typically modest (6 to 11 pounds). Nevertheless, gaining weight is not as hazardous to a person's health as continuing to smoke. Quitting improves health and extends life; but returning to the risk level of nonsmokers takes years, and most ex-smokers will retain some elevated risk for lung cancer unless they quit smoking when they were young. Indeed, quitting while young is a health advantage.

Suggested Readings

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Tips from former smokers. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/about/index.html> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began a campaign to deter smoking by using the stories from smokers who have quit. This webpage presents information about that campaign and statistics about smoking in the United States.
- Proctor, R. N. (2012). *Golden holocaust: Origins of the cigarette catastrophe and the case for abolition*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Robert Proctor writes about the tobacco industry and how it has created the deadliest habit in the world. His book levels harsh accusations of deception against this industry backed by an examination of the history, business, and politics of tobacco.

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS). (2014). *The health consequences of smoking—50 years of progress: A report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: Author. To mark the 50th anniversary of the first Surgeon General's report on smoking and health, the Department of Health and Human Services prepared this extensive review report that traces the history and provides a current status of topics related to tobacco.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2019a & b). *WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco use 2000–2025* (3rd ed.). Geneva: Author. In 2019 the World Health Organization published the latest in a series of reports on their extensive program to reduce exposure to tobacco worldwide. One of the reports (2019a) focused on efforts to encourage decreased tobacco use, and the other (2019b) reported on trends in tobacco use worldwide.



Leszek Czerwinka/Shutterstock.com

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 13-1** Trace the history of alcohol consumption, contrasting attitudes across time and cultures
- 13-2** Describe three demographic factors that have a strong relationship to drinking alcohol
- 13-3** Explain the chemical process that occurs when metabolizing alcohol
- 13-4** Identify three direct and three indirect hazards of alcohol consumption
- 13-5** Considering that alcohol consumption always provides some risk, analyze the circumstances and individuals for whom drinking alcohol may provide benefits
- 13-6** Discuss three factors that are risks for developing problem drinking
- 13-7** Evaluate which of the models of drinking best explains why people start to drink alcohol
- 13-8** Evaluate which of the models of drinking best differentiates problem drinkers from nonproblem drinking
- 13-9** Evaluate the evidence indicating that problem drinkers can change their behavior without entering a treatment program
- 13-10** Evaluate the evidence of success for treatments oriented toward abstinence
- 13-11** Evaluate the evidence for the effectiveness and risks of controlled drinking
- 13-12** Analyze the success of relapse prevention efforts, considering the differing goals of abstinence and moderation
- 13-13** Contrast the health effects of illicit drug use and those of the legally available drugs such as alcohol and tobacco
- 13-14** Differentiate drug use from drug abuse

CHAPTER 13

Using Alcohol and Other Drugs

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Daniel Radcliffe

- Alcohol Consumption—Yesterday and Today

A Brief History of Alcohol Consumption

The Prevalence of Alcohol Consumption Today

The Effects of Alcohol

The Hazards of Alcohol

The Benefits of Alcohol

Why Do People Drink?

- Disease Models
- Cognitive-Physiological Theories
- The Social Learning Model

Changing Problem Drinking

- Change Without Therapy
- Treatments Oriented Toward Abstinence
- Controlled Drinking
- The Problem of Relapse

Other Drugs

- Health Effects
- Drug Misuse and Abuse
- Treatment for Drug Abuse
- Preventing and Controlling Drug Use

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on six basic questions:

1. What are the major trends in alcohol consumption?
2. What are the health effects of drinking alcohol?
3. Why do people drink?
4. How can people change problem drinking?
5. What problems are associated with relapse?
6. What are the health effects of other drugs?

Alcohol Consumption—Yesterday and Today

Alcohol is more widely consumed than any other drug, not only in the United States but also in many other countries (Edwards, 2000), and its use both presents problems and raises questions. Daniel Radcliffe's drinking caused serious problems, but is all alcohol consumption as destructive as his? What does alcohol do in the body, and what are its risks? What drinking patterns present problems? This chapter includes answers to these questions, but first we examine the history of drinking, which reveals different attitudes about alcohol use in the past.

13-1 A Brief History of Alcohol Consumption

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 13-1** Trace the history of alcohol consumption, contrasting attitudes across time and cultures

The history of alcohol is not easily traceable; it was discovered worldwide and repeatedly, dating back before recorded history. Producing beverage alcohol requires no sophisticated technology: The yeast that is responsible for producing alcohol is airborne, and fermentation occurs naturally in fruits, fruit juices, and grain mixtures. Even ancient cultures used beverage alcohol (Anderson, 2006). Ancient Babylonians discovered both wine (fermented grape juice) and beer (fermented grain), as did the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Chinese, and Indians. Pre-Columbian tribes in the Americas also used fermented products.

Ancient civilizations also discovered drunkenness, of course. In several of those countries, such as Greece, drunkenness was not only allowed but also practically required on certain occasions, but these occasions were limited to festivals. This pattern resembles present-day practices in the United States, where drunkenness is condoned at some parties and celebrations. Most societies condone drinking



Check Your Health Risks

Regarding Alcohol and Drug Use

Check the items that apply to you.

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. I have had five or more alcoholic drinks in one day at least once during the past month. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. I have had five or more alcoholic drinks on the same occasion on at least five different days during the past month. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. When I drink too much, I sometimes don't remember a lot of the things that happened. <input type="checkbox"/> 4. I sometimes ride with a driver who has been drinking. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. On at least one occasion during the past year, I drove a motor vehicle after having an alcoholic drink. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. I rarely have more than two drinks in one day. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. I do not drive when I am intoxicated, but I have driven an automobile after drinking. <input type="checkbox"/> 8. I sometimes play sports or go swimming after drinking. <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Some of my friends or family have told me that I drink too much. <input type="checkbox"/> 10. I have tried to cut down on my drinking, but I never seem to succeed. <input type="checkbox"/> 11. At least once in my life, I tried to completely quit drinking, but I was not successful. <input type="checkbox"/> 12. I believe that the best way to enjoy many activities (such as a | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> dance or a football game) is to drink alcohol. <input type="checkbox"/> 13. After waking up with a hangover, I sometimes have a drink to feel better. <input type="checkbox"/> 14. There are some activities that I perform better after drinking. <input type="checkbox"/> 15. I have consumed fewer than 10 alcoholic drinks in my lifetime. |
|--|--|---|

Most of these items represent a health risk related to using alcohol by increasing risk for diseases and unintentional injuries. However, agreeing with Item 6 probably reflects a healthy pattern of consumption for many people, but agreeing with Item 15 is not necessarily a healthy choice for everyone. As you read this chapter, you will learn that some of these items are riskier than others.



Real-World Profile of DANIEL RADCLIFFE



Isabel Infantes - PA Images/Getty Images

Daniel Radcliffe played Harry Potter and became one of the most prominent young actors. He was also one of the many young actors who experienced problems when he received the fame and success that he dreamed of when he became an actor (Shepherd, 2019). He knew that he wanted to be an actor and began to get roles in plays before he landed the role of Harry Potter. This role gave him fame and fortune and the pressure that accompanies fame and fortune.

The attention focused on him made Radcliffe uncomfortable and, like many other celebrities, he began drinking to cope. Drinking made him even more visible, so he drank even more so that he could ignore everyone looking at him.

His drinking continued throughout his teens and young adult years. Unlike many famous problem drinkers, Radcliffe's drunkenness did not become well publicized, but he was often drunk. Indeed, he reported that he filmed scenes of the Harry Potter movies while still drunk from the previous night's drinking. However, Radcliffe got sober in 2010 and, after a relapse in 2011, attained and maintained sobriety. Despite his fame, his story shares many behaviors and problems with others with a history of problems due to alcohol.

alcohol, but many prohibit drunkenness or restrict it to certain occasions.

Ancient China discovered the technique of distillation, which was refined in 8th-century Arabia. The process is somewhat complex, resulting in limited

availability of distilled spirits until commercial manufacture arose. In England, fermented beverages were by far the most common form of alcohol consumption until the 18th century, when England encouraged building distilleries to stimulate commerce. Along with cheap gin

came widespread consumption and widespread drunkenness. However, intoxication from distilled spirits was confined mostly to the lower and working classes; the rich drank wine, a less intoxicating beverage that was imported and thus expensive.

In colonial America, drinking was much more prevalent than it is today. Men, women, and children all drank alcohol, and that choice was acceptable for all. This image is not consistent with our present-day image of the Puritans, but nevertheless, the Puritans did not object to drinking; rather, they considered alcohol one of God's gifts. Indeed, in those years, alcohol was often safer than unpurified water or milk, so the Puritans had a legitimate reason to condone the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Drunkenness, however, was not acceptable. The Puritans believed that alcohol, like all things, should be used in moderation; therefore, the Puritans established severe prohibitions against drunkenness but not against drinking.

The 50 years following U.S. independence marked a transition in the way early Americans thought about alcohol (Edwards, 2000). A dedicated, vocal minority came to consider liquor a “demon,” arguing for total abstinence from its use. A similar movement arose in Britain. Initially, this attitude was limited to the upper and upper-middle classes, but later, abstinence came to

be an accepted doctrine of the middle class and people who aspired to join the middle class. Intemperance in drinking alcohol thus became associated with the lower classes, and “respectable” people, especially women, were expected not to be heavy drinkers.

Temperance societies proliferated throughout the United States during the mid-1800s. However, the name is not quite accurate. The societies did not promote *temperance*—that is, the moderate use of alcohol. Instead, they advocated for *prohibition*—the total abstinence from alcohol. Temperance societies held that liquor weakens inhibitions; loosens desires and passions; causes a large percentage of crime, poverty, and broken homes; and is powerfully addicting, so much so that even an occasional drink would put one in danger.

Figure 13.1 shows a dramatic decrease in per capita alcohol consumption in the United States after 1830, a decrease due directly to the spread of this movement.

In response to the growing temperance movement, both the demographics and the location of drinking changed. Rather than being consumed in a family setting or a respectable tavern, alcohol became increasingly confined to saloons, which were patronized largely by urban industrial workers (Popham, 1978); drinking became associated with the lower and working classes. Portrayed by the temperance movement as the

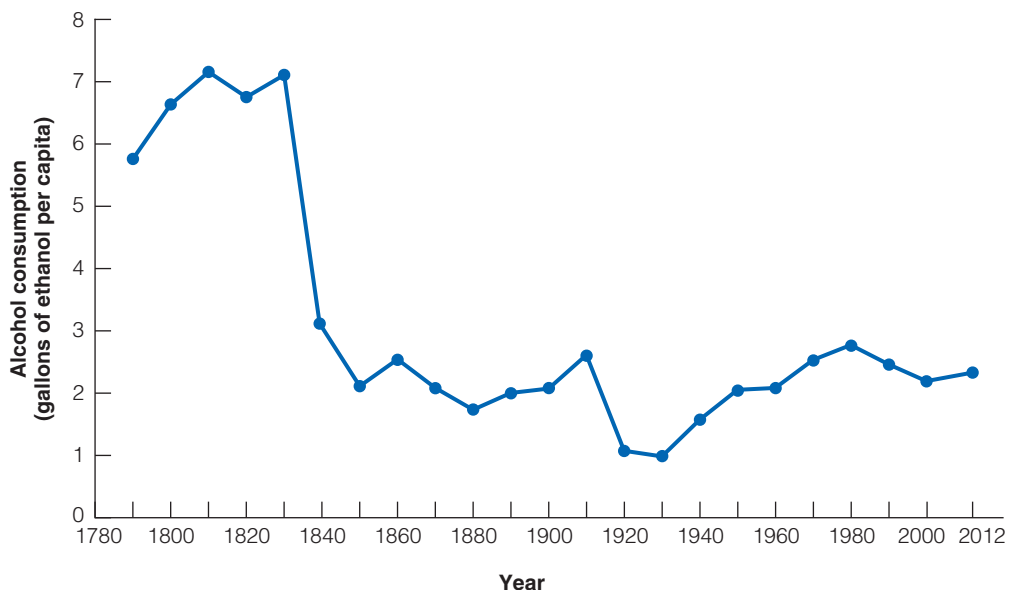


FIGURE 13.1 U.S. consumption of alcoholic beverages, 1790 to 2016, aged 15 and older.

Source: “The alcoholic republic: An American tradition,” (p. 9), by W. J. Rorabaugh, 1979, New York: Oxford University Press. Copyright 1979 by Oxford University Press. Also “Apparent per capita alcohol consumption: National, state, and regional trends, 1977–2016” by S. P. Haughwout & M. E. Slater, Surveillance Report #110. Retrieved from <https://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/surveillance110/CONS16.pdf>

personification of evil and moral degeneracy, saloons served as a focus for growing prohibitionist sentiment.

Prohibitionists were finally victorious in 1919 with the ratification of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which outlawed the manufacture, sale, or transportation of alcoholic beverages, and per capita consumption fell drastically (as shown in Figure 13.1). The amendment was not popular and created a large illegal market for alcohol. In 1934, the 21st Amendment repealed the 18th Amendment, and Prohibition ended. Figure 13.1 shows that after the repeal of Prohibition, alcohol consumption rose sharply. Although the current per capita consumption of alcohol is considerably higher than during Prohibition, it is less than half the rate reached during the first three decades of the 19th century.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Make a chart of alcohol consumption in the United States. That chart should include the years 1800, 1880, 1920, 1980, and 2020 with information about who could drink alcohol legally, what types of alcohol people drank, and what were the attitudes toward drunkenness at each of these points in time.

13-2 The Prevalence of Alcohol Consumption Today

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 13-2** Describe three demographic factors that have a strong relationship to drinking alcohol

About 68% of adults in the United States are classified as current drinkers (defined as having had at least one drink during the past year), 55% are regular drinkers, 26% report binge drinking (five or more drinks on the same occasion at least once per month), and 6% are heavy drinkers (more than 14 drinks per week for men or seven per week for women) (SAMHSA, 2019). The drinking rates shown in Figure 13.2 reflect a leveling of a 20-year decline in alcohol consumption in the United States. More than 2 billion people worldwide are

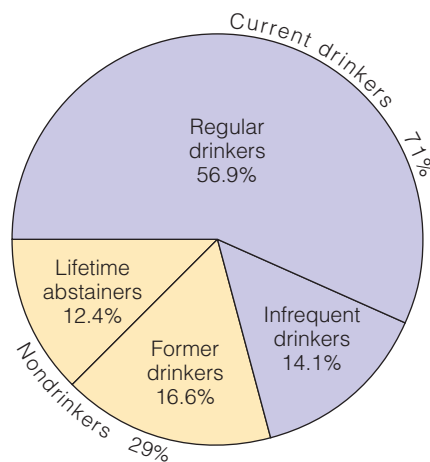


FIGURE 13.2 Types of drinkers, adults, United States, 2018.

Source: CDC "National Health Interview Survey: Summary health statistics," 2018, Table A-13a. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis/shs/tables.htm>.

current drinkers, which represent less than half of the adult population (World Health Organization [WHO], 2018a).

The frequency of drinking and the prevalence of heavy drinking are not equal for all demographic groups in the United States. As shown in Figure 13.3, drinking varies by ethnicity. European Americans tend to have higher rates of drinking than other ethnic groups (National Center for Health Statistics [NCHS], 2019). Rates of binge and heavy drinking also vary with ethnicity. Native Americans have the highest rates of these drinking patterns, and Asian Americans have the lowest.

Age is another factor in drinking. Adults aged 25 to 44 have the highest rates of drinking, but young adults aged 18 to 25 have the highest rates of binge drinking and heavy drinking. More than a third of drinkers aged 18 to 25 reported binge drinking within the month before the survey (SAMHSA, 2019). However, young drinkers may age into more moderate drinkers, representing a pattern that appeared in a study on adolescent binge drinkers (Tucker et al., 2003). However, many other patterns occur for binge drinking. A study of binge drinking adolescents in Great Britain (Viner & Taylor, 2007) indicated that their pattern of drinking predicted problem drinking in adulthood.

Binge drinking can lead to a variety of hazards (especially for inexperienced drinkers), including intoxication, poor judgment, and impaired coordination. Certain situations promote binge drinking, and college students are at particular risk, not only in the United

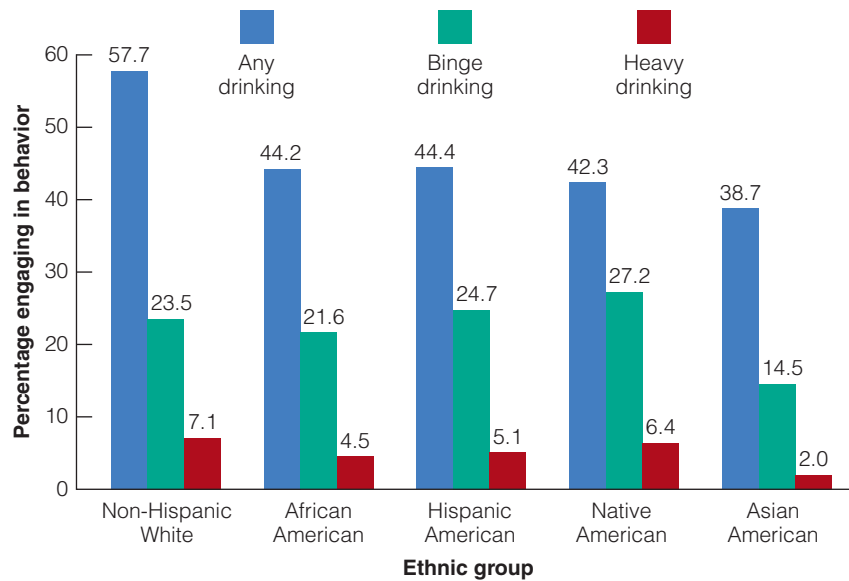


FIGURE 13.3 Percentage of people aged 12 and older who report monthly alcohol use, binge drinking, and heavy drinking, by ethnic group, United States, 2018.

Source: “Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables,” SAMSHA, 2019, Tables 2-19B, 2-20B, 2-21B. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2018-nsduh-detailed-tables>

States (Johnston et al., 2020) but also in Australia, Europe, and South America (Karam et al., 2007). College men face risks concerning alcohol use when they try to “man up” and match some representation of masculine norms such as risk-taking, being the “playboy,” and drinking to the point of intoxication (Iwamoto et al., 2011). Men in fraternities are especially at risk; fraternities often hold social norms promoting these attitudes and behaviors. However, drinking patterns tend to change when individuals are no longer affiliated. Thus, college drinking habits are not predictors of drinking problems after graduation (Jackson et al., 2001). For young people, however, binge drinking is a persistent problem that creates many hazards for unintentional injury, homicide, and suicide—the leading causes of death in this age group (Xu et al., 2020).

Among adolescents aged 12 to 17, current use of alcohol dropped dramatically after the legal age for buying alcohol was raised to 21. In 1985, more than 40% of the adolescents in this age group were current users, but by 1992, only 20% were current drinkers. The rate has drifted downward slightly during the 21st century (Kann et al., 2018). Binge drinking, however, is common among high school and college students. Among high school students, for example, 13.5% reported that they

engaged in binge drinking within the month before the survey. Although this rate may not seem large, all of these students were drinking illegally. However, reaching the legal age for drinking—one’s 21st birthday celebration—is a major occasion for a drinking binge that often prompts the highest level of drinking in which the celebrant has ever engaged (Rutledge et al., 2008).

When the rate for drinking among young people began to decline, authorities speculated that illicit drugs might be replacing alcohol as preferred substances. However, the evidence for this hypothesis is not clear. The Monitoring the Future Project (Johnston et al., 2020) found that the decreases in illicit drug use parallel the decrease in alcohol use rather than rise in compensation as drinking decreases.

Alcohol consumption rates are highest among young adults and lowest among adults older than 50 (SAMHSA, 2019). Some people decrease their alcohol consumption as soon as they leave college with its social situations and pressures to drink. Thus, alcohol intake is inversely related to age—older ages are associated with lower levels of drinking. The general trend toward decreased alcohol consumption with increasing age may be a result of either people quitting or drinkers reducing the amount they drink.

Gender and educational level are also related to alcohol consumption. Men have been significantly more likely than women to be drinkers (NCHS, 2016a, 2016b), but that gender difference has dwindled. More men than women report that they have consumed alcohol during their lifetimes, but the percentages for current consumption are similar for women and men, except for middle-aged and older adults (SAMHSA, 2019). In addition, men who are current drinkers are only slightly more likely than women to report binge drinking (51% to 49%) but more likely to report heavy drinking (60% to 40%) (SAMSHA, 2019). These percentages suggest that gender differences in drinking have changed over the past several decades but that men have more problems with heavy drinking than do women.

Educational level is another predictor of drinking behavior. In Chapter 12, we saw that the more education people have, the less likely they are to smoke cigarettes. With alcohol, however, the reverse is true: the more years of schooling, the greater the likelihood that people will drink alcohol. In 2018, about 80% of people with a college degree were regular drinkers, compared with only 48% of people who failed to graduate from high school (SAMHSA, 2019). After college graduation, however, individuals become less likely to be binge or drink heavily than any other educational group. High school dropouts are more likely to be heavy drinkers and to develop drinking problems when they reach their 30s (Muthen & Muthen, 2000).

These patterns of alcohol consumption are not unique to the United States, but the amount and patterns of alcohol consumption vary internationally. Culture and religion have an impact on alcohol consumption. For example, in countries in the eastern Mediterranean region in which Islam is the dominant religion, alcohol consumption is low. In Europe, Canada, Australia, most countries in South America, China, and Russia, consumption is high (WHO, 2018a). Across the world, men are more likely to drink than women, and people with higher educational and income levels are more likely to drink than those with lower levels of either.

Some countries, such as the United States, Canada, and the Scandinavian countries, associate alcohol with a restricted number of occasions, whereas other countries, such as France, Italy, and Greece, integrate alcohol into daily life (Bloomfield et al., 2003). Drinking is more common in the latter countries, but intoxication is more common in the former. However, more numerous drinking occasions tend to be related to more

numerous problems related to drinking, regardless of the pattern (Kuntsche et al., 2008).

IN SUMMARY

People have been consuming alcohol since before recorded history, and people have probably abused alcohol for almost as long. Most ancient societies—as well as modern societies—condone alcohol in moderation, but condemn drunkenness and alcohol abuse.

Alcohol consumption per capita reached a peak in the United States during about 1830 to 1850, but then consumption dropped dramatically due to the efforts of early prohibitionists. Presently, alcohol consumption in the United States is stable. About half of adults are current regular drinkers, 25% are binge drinkers, and 6% are heavy drinkers. European Americans have higher rates of alcohol consumption than Hispanic Americans and African Americans; adults aged 26 to 34 consume more than other age groups; and college graduates are much more likely to be drinkers than high school dropouts, who nevertheless are more likely to be heavy drinkers later in their lives. Drinking attitudes and patterns also vary among countries.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Construct a profile that includes several types of demographic information of individuals who exhibit each of the following patterns of alcohol consumption: someone who chooses not to drink alcohol, someone who chooses to drink and becomes a moderate consumer, someone who experiences binge drinking at least monthly, and someone who develops alcohol use disorder.

13.3 The Effects of Alcohol

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 13-3** Explain the chemical process that occurs when metabolizing alcohol

Essentially the same thing happens to alcohol when you drink it as when you do not—it turns to vinegar

(Goodwin, 1976). In the body, two enzymes turn alcohol into vinegar or acetic acid. The first enzyme, **alcohol dehydrogenase**, is located in the liver and has no other known function except to metabolize alcohol. This enzyme breaks down alcohol into aldehyde, which is a very toxic chemical. The second enzyme, **aldehyde dehydrogenase**, converts aldehyde to acetic acid.

The process of metabolizing alcohol produces at least three health-related outcomes: (1) an increase in lactic acid, which correlates with anxiety attacks; (2) an increase in uric acid, which causes gout; and (3) an increase of fat in the liver and in the blood.

The specific alcohol used in beverages is called **ethanol**. Like other alcohols, ethanol is a poison. But cases of alcohol poisoning are not common and almost always involve inexperienced drinkers who have drunk very large amounts of distilled liquor in a very short time. Otherwise, ingesting beverage alcohol is self-limiting: Intoxication usually leads to unconsciousness, preventing lethal poisoning.

Men and women are not equally affected by drinking alcohol. One factor is the difference in body weight; a 120-pound person will be more strongly affected by 3 ounces of alcohol than a 220-pound person. But body weight is not the only factor in this gender difference. Given the same blood alcohol level, men's brains are more strongly affected than women's brains (Ceylan-Isik et al., 2010). However, women's stomachs tend to absorb alcohol more efficiently, producing higher blood alcohol levels with less drinking (Bode & Bode, 1997). Thus, women and men have different physiological responses to alcohol, some of which may make women more vulnerable to the effects of alcohol.

Among the problems associated with drinking are alcohol's ability to produce tolerance, dependence, withdrawal, and addiction. Although these concepts apply to many drugs, their application to alcohol is necessary in evaluating alcohol's potential hazards.

Tolerance is a term applied to the effects of a drug when, with continued use, more and more of the drug is required to produce the same effect. Drugs with high tolerance potential may be dangerous because people who build up tolerance need to take more of the drug to produce the effect they want and expect. If this amount is progressively larger, any dangerous effects or side effects of the drug will become more of a hazard. Alcohol is a drug with generally moderate tolerance potential, but it seems to affect people differentially. For some, heavy use of alcohol for an extended period is required before noticeable tolerance begins to develop. For

others, tolerance can develop within a week of moderate daily consumption. With increased tolerance comes an increased risk of the physical damage that alcohol can cause.

Dependence is separate from tolerance, and it, too, is a term that applies to many drugs. Dependence occurs when a drug becomes so incorporated into the functioning of the body's cells that it becomes necessary for "normal" functioning. If the drug is discontinued, the body's dependence on that drug becomes apparent and **withdrawal** symptoms develop. These symptoms are the body's signs that it is adjusting to functioning without the drug. Dependence and withdrawal are physical symptoms connected to drug use. Generally, withdrawal symptoms are the opposite of the drug's effects. Because alcohol produces mostly depressant effects, withdrawal from it produces symptoms of restlessness, irritability, and agitation (WHO, 2004).

Many drugs produce notoriously unpleasant withdrawal, and alcohol is one of the worst. How difficult the process will be depends on many factors, including the length of use and the degree of dependence. In some cases, withdrawal from alcohol can be life threatening through effects on the cardiovascular system (Bär et al., 2008) and requires careful management (Mayo-Smith et al., 2004). Usually, the first symptom to appear is tremor—the "shakes." In those severely dependent, **delirium tremens** occurs, with hallucinations, disorientation, and possibly convulsions. The withdrawal process usually lasts between two days and a week. The physical dangers are so severe that the process is often completed in a special facility devoted to alcohol treatment.

Tolerance and dependence are independent properties. A drug may produce tolerance but not dependence; also, a person can develop dependence on a drug that has little or no tolerance potential. However, some drugs have both a tolerance and dependence potential. Tolerance and dependence are not inevitable consequences of taking drugs (Zinberg, 1984), and alcohol is a good example. Not everyone who drinks alcohol does so with sufficient frequency and in sufficient quantity to develop a tolerance and most drinkers do not become dependent.

The combination of dependence and withdrawal is sometimes described as **addiction**. Laypeople (Chassin et al., 2007) and experts (Pouletty, 2002) tend to use different definitions, but element of craving for the substance and compulsive use are part of everyone's definition (Chassin et al., 2007). Experts distinguish addiction from dependence by considering the

compulsive behavior and damage done to people's life through this behavior—"loss of control of drug use or the compulsive seeking and taking of drugs despite adverse consequences" (Pouletty, 2002, p. 731). Some experts even differentiate drug abuse from addiction, defining abuse as excessive and harmful use, even if the person is not dependent. Thus, considering the properties of a drug such as alcohol includes tolerance, dependence, addiction, and abuse, each of which is separable from the others.

Some people speak of "psychological" dependence or addiction, but this term is not equivalent to dependence on a drug such as alcohol. Many behaviors become part of one's habitual manner of responding. Giving up the activity is accomplished only through much difficulty because the person has become habituated to it. This situation is common; people have great difficulty in changing behaviors such as gambling, overeating, jogging, or even watching television or shopping. Indeed, many people readily accept these behaviors as addictions. Whether this conceptualization is valid remains controversial; without a substance underlying the behavior, the analogy is not clear, but many argue that the behavioral pattern is.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Imagine yourself in this situation: Within the past 30 minutes, you have consumed two alcoholic drinks. Analyze what is happening in your digestive system and nervous system and predict what will happen within the next hour.

13-4 The Hazards of Alcohol

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

13-4 Identify three direct and three indirect hazards of alcohol consumption

Alcohol produces a variety of hazards, both direct and indirect. *Direct hazards* are the harmful physical effects of alcohol itself, exclusive of any psychological, social, or economic consequences. Individuals with severe alcohol problems have more than twice the mortality risk as those with no alcohol problems (Fichter et al., 2011).

Indirect hazards are the harmful consequences that result from psychological and physiological impairments produced by alcohol. Both direct and indirect hazards contribute to an increased mortality rate for heavy drinkers (Standridge et al., 2004).

Direct Hazards Alcohol affects many organ systems in the body, but liver damage is the main health consideration for long-term, heavy drinkers because the liver is mainly in charge of detoxifying alcohol. The oxidation that occurs during alcohol metabolism may be toxic, destroying cell membranes and causing liver damage (Reuben, 2008). With prolonged heavy drinking, scarring occurs, and this scarring is typically followed by **cirrhosis**, or the accumulation of nonfunctional scar tissue in the liver. Cirrhosis is an irreversible condition and a major cause of death among alcoholics. Not all alcoholics develop liver cirrhosis, and people with no history of alcohol abuse may also develop the condition, but cirrhosis has a significant association with heavy alcohol use in countries around the world (Mandayam, 2004). In 2009, deaths from cirrhosis began to increase in the United States, disproportionately in individuals between ages 25 and 34 and mostly as a result of increased alcohol consumption (Tapper & Parikh, 2018).

Prolonged heavy drinking is also implicated in the development of a neurological dysfunction called Korsakoff syndrome (also known as Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome). Korsakoff syndrome is characterized by chronic cognitive impairment, severe memory problems for recent events, disorientation, and an inability to learn new information. Alcohol is related to the development of this syndrome through its interference with the absorption of thiamin, one of the B vitamins. Heavy drinkers can experience thiamin deficiency, which is worsened by their typically poor nutrition (Stacey & Sullivan, 2004). Alcohol accelerates the progression of thiamin-related brain damage, and when this process has started, vitamin supplements do not reverse the progression. Moreover, most alcoholics do not receive treatment until the process is at an irreversible stage.

Although heavy, prolonged drinking is clearly a risk factor for neurological damage, the role of light to moderate consumption is less clear. Some research has shown no detrimental effect of light to moderate drinking and cognitive deficit, and some has even shown a decreased likelihood of developing Alzheimer's disease. A systematic review of that research (Piazza-Gardner et al., 2012) showed similar lack of consistency. One

recent study (Schwarzinger et al., 2018) found a risk for cognitive impairment with any level of alcohol intake, and another (Piumatti et al., 2018) found decreases in cognitive functioning in individuals who drank more than one drink per day.

Alcohol affects the cardiovascular system, but the effects may not all be negative. (The next section looks at the possible positive effects of moderate alcohol consumption on cardiovascular functioning.) Chronic heavy drinking or periodic heavy (binge) drinking, however, does have a direct and harmful effect on the cardiovascular system (Chiva-Blanch & Badmon, 2020; Rehm et al., 2010). In large doses, alcohol reduces oxidation of fatty acids (the heart's primary fuel source) in the myocardium. The heart directly metabolizes ethanol, producing fatty-acid ethyl esters that impair functioning of the energy-producing structures of the heart. Alcohol can also depress the myocardium's ability to contract, which can lead to abnormal cardiac functioning. Thus, heavy drinking is related to hypertensive and ischemic heart disease as well as hemorrhagic stroke (Rehm et al., 2010).

Heavy drinking also increases the risk for a wide variety of other diseases. The list includes cancers of the mouth, pharynx, esophagus, colon and rectum, liver, and breast (Nelson et al., 2013). In addition, heavy drinking is associated with increased risk for tuberculosis, seizure disorder, diabetes mellitus, and pneumonia (Rehm et al., 2010).

Alcohol has a direct and hazardous effect on pregnancy and the developing fetus in two basic ways. First, alcohol consumption reduces fertility; women who are heavy drinkers are at increased risk for infertility (Eggert et al., 2004). Women who are chronic heavy users of alcohol experience amenorrhea, cessation of the menstrual cycle, which may be caused either by cirrhosis or by a direct effect of alcohol on the pituitary or the hypothalamus. Other possibilities include alcohol's effects on hormone production and regulation and interference with ovulation.

The second direct, hazardous effect of excessive drinking during pregnancy is the increased risk of developmental problems for the fetus, such as congenital malformations of the respiratory and musculoskeletal systems, which produces *fetal alcohol spectrum disorders* (Baumann et al., 2006; Rehm et al., 2010). The most severe form is **fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)**, which affects many infants of mothers who drank heavily during pregnancy, especially those who binge drink. Some tissues in the embryo, such as neurons, are especially

sensitive to alcohol, and exposure causes problems in the developing embryo. These developmental problems produce specific facial abnormalities, growth deficiencies, central nervous system disorders, and cognitive deficits. Indeed, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders are the leading cause of cognitive disabilities in the world (Murthy et al., 2009), but rates are not equal throughout the world; incidence is especially high in South Africa and Croatia (Roozen et al., 2016). Although heavy drinking is the main contributor to fetal alcohol syndrome, heavy smoking, stress, and poor nutrition are also involved, and combinations of these factors are not unusual in heavy drinkers.

What about moderate and even light drinking during pregnancy? Light to moderate drinking is not likely to cause fetal alcohol syndrome unless binge drinking is involved, but any level of alcohol exposure affects developing embryos. Even light drinking increases the risk for miscarriages and stillbirths (Kesmodel et al., 2002). Binge drinking during pregnancy is associated with deficits in cognitive functioning (Bailey et al., 2004) and increases the frequency of psychological problems (O'Leary et al., 2010). Even small amounts of alcohol, especially during the early months of pregnancy, may have direct and hazardous effects on the developing fetus (Baumann et al., 2006; Goldsmith, 2004). In addition, even moderate drinking during pregnancy increases the risk for the appearance of conduct disorders during childhood (Murray et al., 2016). Unfortunately, about 10% of pregnant women in the world drink alcohol, which creates a large worldwide burden of disease.

Indirect Hazards Despite the many direct hazards of drinking alcohol, the indirect hazards are even more common. Most of the indirect dangers arise from alcohol's effects on judgment, attention, and aggression. Alcohol also affects coordination and alters cognitive functioning in ways that contribute to increased chances of unintentional injury not only to the drinker but also to others (Rehm et al., 2010).

The most frequent and serious indirect hazard of alcohol consumption is the increased likelihood of unintentional injuries, the third leading cause of death in the United States, the leading cause of death for people under age 45 (Xu et al., 2020), and a leading cause of death and injury worldwide (Rehm et al., 2010). A dose-response relationship exists between alcohol consumption and unintentional fatal injuries; that is, the greater the number of drinks consumed per occasion, the greater the incidence of fatalities from

unintentional injuries. Alcohol is the cause of over 800,000 fatal unintentional injuries throughout the world each year (WHO, 2018a).

Motor vehicle crashes account for the largest number of alcohol-related fatalities. Although alcohol-related traffic fatalities have decreased in the United States over the past 15 years, more than 10,000 people died in 2018 from injuries resulting from alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes (National Center for Statistics and Analysis, 2019). This number represents about 29% of all traffic fatalities, including both passengers and drivers. More men than women were involved in fatal crashes, and more than half were between the ages of 21 and 35. In addition, those involved tended to have a record of previous crashes and driving while intoxicated incidents.

For some drinkers, alcohol consumption can also lead to more aggressive behavior. Both laboratory experiments and crime statistics have shown a relationship between alcohol and aggression, but the effect does not apply to everyone. Trait anger (the disposition to experience and respond with anger) is an important factor. Not surprisingly, men with moderate or high trait anger behaved more aggressively than men with lower levels of anger (Parrott & Zeichner, 2002). However, trait anger combined with alcohol prompted these men to administer longer and higher levels of shock than their sober counterparts and provoked both women and men to engage in more aggressive verbal exchanges (Eckhardt & Crane, 2008). Alcohol may not be the underlying cause of partner violence, but it intensifies the violence (Graham et al., 2011). Jealousy combined with alcohol predicted intimate partner violence (Foran & O'Leary, 2008). Thus, some people are more likely than others to become aggressive under the influence of alcohol. During his relapse, Daniel Radcliffe got into fights while intoxicated and was even asked to leave a bar due to his drunkenness and fighting.

Alcohol is also related to suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and completed suicides (Darvishi et al., 2015). In addition, alcohol use has a higher relationship to suicide attempts than other forms of drug use (Rossow et al., 2005). Similarly, alcohol is related to crime. Two early studies (Mayfield, 1976; Wolfgang, 1957) indicated that either the victim or the perpetrator, or both, had been drinking in two-thirds of the homicides studied. Recent research (Felson & Staff, 2010) has confirmed this relationship and extended the findings to assaults, including sexual assaults, as well as robbery and burglary. Not only are people who commit homicides likely to be

drinking but also consuming alcohol relates to increased chances of being a crime victim. These relationships, however, do not demonstrate that alcohol causes crime. Most crimes are committed by people who are not problem drinkers, and the majority of alcohol abusers do not commit violent crimes. Thus, the relationship between alcohol and crime is complex (Dingwall, 2005).

Finally, drinking alcohol can influence people's decision-making in ways that promoted aggression (Parrott & Eckhardt, 2018). A study of group decision making (Sayette et al., 2004) showed that when group members had been drinking, the decision was riskier than when the group members were completely sober. Alterations also appear on the individual level and in nonproblem drinkers, who experienced problems in factoring several variables into a decision-making situation after drinking (George et al., 2005). Unfortunately, drinking also impairs drinkers' recognition that their decision-making capacity is impaired (Parrott & Eckhardt, 2018).

Impairment and risky decisions can be dangerous in sexual situations. For example, young men who were intoxicated expressed more interest in having unprotected sex with an attractive woman than comparable men who were not intoxicated, even when reminded of the risk (Lyvers et al., 2011). Other research indicates that people who have been drinking are more likely than others to be involved in forced sexual experiences, either as victim or as perpetrator (Abbey et al., 2014; Testa et al., 2004). Thus, drinking conveys a variety of risks.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Considering your current pattern of drinking, analyze which direct and which indirect hazards are your biggest risks.

13-5 The Benefits of Alcohol

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 13-5** Considering that alcohol consumption always provides some risk, analyze the circumstances and individuals for whom drinking alcohol may provide benefits

Is it possible that drinking might be good for you? This question was raised due to several early studies reporting a U-shaped or J-shaped relationship between alcohol consumption and mortality (Room & Day, 1974; Stason et al., 1976); that is, research indicated that people who did not drink and those who drank heavily died earlier than those who drank at low-to-moderate levels (Holahan et al., 2010; Klatsky & Udaltsova, 2007). This advantage appeared first among men, but additional research showed that this advantage applies to women (Baer et al., 2011).

The possibility of benefits for drinking has been difficult to accept, especially among those who provide treatment for those with drinking problems. Familiarity with the dangers of drinking makes these individuals reluctant to recommend drinking to anyone. This skepticism has resulted in questions concerning the methodology and validity of the studies that have shown benefits for drinking. Arguments focusing on possible flaws in this research (Plunk et al., 2014; Stockwell et al., 2016) point to difficulties in defining the categories of *abstainer*, *moderate drinker*, and *heavy drinker*. People who misrepresent their alcohol intake could bias the results by placing themselves in the wrong category of drinking. However, this misinformation creates a bias that works both ways (Klatsky & Udaltsova, 2013). For example, if individuals underreport their drinking, the *abstainer* category would include individuals who drink, which would bias the findings of disadvantage for nondrinkers. Heavier drinkers in the *light-to-moderate* category, however, would bias the findings of benefits for that category. Thus, such biases would not lead to a systematic disqualification of the results.

Another troublesome possibility is the inclusion of former drinkers in the *abstainer* category (Chikritzhs et al., 2015). This combination would mix lifelong abstainers and former drinkers who have been heavy drinkers, which would not represent individuals not exposed to alcohol. However, studies that have made this distinction still indicate benefits of drinking (Klatsky & Udaltsova, 2013). Yet another critique is the possibility that light drinkers do not gain benefits from alcohol but from their overall healthier lifestyle (Chikritzhs et al., 2015; McCulloch, 2014). That possibility is challenging to address; the method of study for this topic has been observational, not experimental. Thus, participants are not assigned to drinking categories, they self-select, and that selection might include many healthy lifestyle choices. However, much evidence supports the benefits of alcohol consumption.

Cardiovascular Benefits of Alcohol Most of the health benefit from drinking comes from changes to the cardiovascular system (Chiva-Blanch, & Badimon, 2020; Klatsky, 2010; Mukamal et al., 2010) and applies to people in cultures around the world. A developing line of research indicates that alcohol affects the course of atherosclerosis, the disease condition that underlies most CVD (Mochly-Rosen & Zakhari, 2010). Alcohol intake has a causal relationship to changes in cholesterol that are beneficial and lower the risk of cardiovascular disease (Vu et al., 2016). In addition, those changes suggest that the improvements disappear as alcohol consumption increases, which is consistent with the beneficial pattern.

The findings about alcohol and beneficial cholesterol changes are also consistent with the evidence about drinking and risk of stroke. Alcohol offers protection against ischemic stroke, which typically results from vascular disease, but raises the risk for hemorrhagic stroke, which occurs when a blood vessel in the brain ruptures and bleeds into the brain (Patra et al., 2010; Rehm et al., 2010). Also consistent with this pattern is a lowering of risk for peripheral vascular disease; that is, low-to-moderate levels of alcohol seem to be beneficial in decreasing the risk for diseases that result from restriction of blood flow through arteries. These diseases are major causes of death and disability throughout the world, so even modest benefits can have a significant effect on mortality rates.

Other Benefits of Alcohol The effects of alcohol on cholesterol are likely to be the underlying reason for some of the other health benefits of drinking. For example, lowered risk of gallstones (Walcher et al., 2010) is likely to result from improved lipid profiles. Another example is Alzheimer's disease (Collins, 2008; Lobo et al., 2010), the most common type of dementia (see Chapter 11). Protection against dementia is a surprising effect for alcohol, considering that Korsakoff syndrome—a dementia that produces memory problems and other cognitive deficits—develops in long-term, heavy drinkers. However, this link between Alzheimer's disease and light-to-moderate drinking appears in some—but not all—studies; one meta-analysis (Cao et al., 2015) found too little evidence to conclude that drinking lowers the risk. This failure may be due to the complex risks for Alzheimer's disease, which has both genetic and nongenetic components. Among the nongenetic risk factors is high cholesterol, thus a decrease in risk for low-to-moderate drinkers is consistent with alcohol's positive effect on cholesterol (Li et al., 2015).

TABLE 13.1 Factors That Produce Benefits for Low-to-Moderate Alcohol Consumption

Lowered Risk For	Who Benefit	Effect Occurs Through
Cardiovascular disease	Middle-aged and older people	Improved cholesterol metabolism
Ischemic stroke	Middle-aged and older people	Improved cholesterol metabolism
Gallstones		Improved cholesterol metabolism
Type 2 diabetes	Women	Influence on insulin sensitivity

One health advantage that seems unrelated to cholesterol is beneficial effects on insulin sensitivity and inflammation (Mukamal et al., 2005; Rimm & Moats, 2007). The effect on insulin sensitivity explains why light-to-moderate drinkers experience lower chances of developing type 2 diabetes than those who abstain (Hendriks, 2007), but alcohol also affects glucose tolerance and insulin resistance. However, a meta-analysis (Knott et al., 2015) indicated that these benefits might apply only to women. The effect of alcohol on inflammation is not linear, which fits into the familiar pattern of benefits at lower levels combined with risks at higher levels of alcohol consumption (Barr et al., 2016). Inflammation is an underlying factor in many diseases, so a connection with alcohol may relate to lower overall mortality risk for light-to-moderate drinkers.

Who Benefits? Despite some evidence for health benefits, drinking also carries substantial risks, making an analysis of risks and benefits a necessary step. One such analysis (Rehm et al., 2007) indicated that the benefits outweigh the risks for some people, whereas others are more at risk from drinking. A more recent meta-analysis (GBD Alcohol Collaborators, 2018) indicated that the risks outweigh the benefits on a worldwide level due to the dangers of increased cancer risks.

Pattern of drinking and age are important factors in the dangers of drinking (Klatsky, 2010). Binge drinking brings intoxication and dangerous impairments of judgment and coordination, which overrides any possible health benefit that alcohol might confer. Age is also important; the benefits of drinking do not appear among young people but begin during middle age (Klatsky & Udaltsova, 2007; Rehm et al., 2007) and continue into older age (Downer et al., 2015).

Gender is also a relevant factor: Women gain the protective effects of alcohol at lower levels of drinking than men; indeed, women may be the only beneficiaries of reduced chances of Type 2 diabetes (Knott et al., 2015). However, women experience the hazards of drinking at lower levels of alcohol intake. **Table 13.1** summarizes these benefits and who benefits.

Drinking offers more health benefits than hazards for some people. However, those people who do not drink probably should not start, and those who do drink regularly (about half the people in the United States) should concentrate on keeping their drinking at low levels of consumption and avoid binge drinking to experience any health benefits. Overall, drinking presents more risks than benefits to the general population (Danaei et al., 2009; GBD Alcohol Collaborators, 2018).

IN SUMMARY

Alcohol consumption has both harmful and beneficial effects on health. In addition, it has some negative indirect effects on society that reach beyond an individual's physical health. The direct hazards of prolonged and heavy drinking include cirrhosis of the liver, an increased risk for several cancers, and a brain dysfunction called Korsakoff syndrome. In addition, heavy drinking during pregnancy increases the risk of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, the most serious of which is fetal alcohol syndrome, a serious disorder that often includes growth deficiencies and severe cognitive deficits. Alcohol is also a risk factor for many types of violence, both intentional and unintentional. The level of alcohol consumption necessary to increase the risk is not as high as the level necessary to produce legal intoxication, but the more heavily people drink, the more likely it is that they will be involved in accidents and violence. Finally, alcohol consumption may also lead to poor decisions.

The principal positive aspect of alcohol consumption is its buffering effect against coronary heart disease, ischemic stroke, and peripheral vascular disease, but these benefits accrue only in middle-aged and older individuals who have a history of light drinking. Heavy or binge drinking increases risks for overall mortality.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Construct a profile of someone who would benefit from alcohol consumption, including personal and demographic information.

13-6 Why Do People Drink?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 13-6** Discuss three factors that are risks for developing problem drinking
- 13-7** Evaluate which of the models of drinking best explains why people start to drink alcohol
- 13-8** Evaluate which of the models of drinking best differentiates problem drinkers from nonproblem drinking

Investigators trying to understand drinking and alcohol abuse have proposed several models to explain behavior related to alcohol consumption. These models go beyond the pharmacological effects of alcohol and even beyond the research findings to integrate and explain drinking. To be complete, a model for drinking behavior must address at least three questions. First, why do people start drinking? Second, why do most people maintain moderate rather than excessive drinking levels? Third, why do some people drink so much that they develop serious problems? The history of alcohol use has shaped our current conceptualizations of drinking.

Until the 19th century, drinking was well accepted in the United States and Europe; this attitude makes drinking the norm, thus requiring no explanation. However, drunkenness was unacceptable under most circumstances, leaving drunkenness in need of explanation. Two models arose during that time to explain drunkenness: the moral model and the medical model (Rotskoff, 2002).

The moral model appeared first, holding that people have free will to choose their behaviors, including excessive drinking. Thus, those who do so are either sinful or morally lacking in the self-discipline necessary to moderate their drinking. The moral model of

alcoholism began to fade in the late 19th century with the growing prominence of medical approaches to problems. Unacceptable behaviors that were formerly cast as moral problems became medical problems and, thus, subject to scientific explanation and medical treatment. However, many people and even some alcoholism treatment staff still take a moralistic view of excessive drinking (Barnett et al., 2017).

The medical model of alcoholism conceptualizes problem drinking as symptomatic of underlying physical problems, and the notion that alcoholism is hereditary grew from this view. The first form of this hypothesis took the view that a “constitutional weakness” ran in families, and this weakness produces alcoholics.

Problem drinking does run in families, and several types of research have explored this genetic link. One strategy involves assessing the degree of agreement in drinking behavior between twins or between adopted children and parents (Foroud et al., 2010). Research generally shows a closer concordance of problem drinking for identical twins than for fraternal twins, which supports some genetic component in alcohol abuse.

Children of problem drinkers are more likely than children of nonproblem drinkers to abuse alcohol as well as other drugs. Daniel Radcliffe said that genetics played a role in his alcohol abuse, saying that his family—but not his parents—has a long history of drinking problems (Shepherd, 2019).

Knowing that there is a genetic component to drinking and alcohol abuse is a first step to building a comprehensive biological model, but it is also necessary to find underlying mechanisms that form the basis for genes to translate into behavior. Alcohol metabolism offers various possibilities for creating a vulnerability to problem drinking. For example, genes influence the functioning of neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, GABA, and serotonin, which have been linked to alcohol's effects (Foroud et al., 2010; Köhnke, 2008).

However, problem drinking will not be traced to one gene pair; dozens of genes are likely involved (Foroud et al., 2010). In addition, the environment and personal factors of the drinker may be important. That is, researchers are looking not only for genetic but also for other biological processes as well as environmental factors that contribute to problem drinking. Within the past 15 years, the field of epigenetics has furthered this approach to understanding alcohol use and abuse. **Epigenetics** is the study of mechanisms that affect gene expression without altering the structure of genes. This field of study is often described as understanding how

biological processes “turn on” or “turn off” gene function. Research on the epigenetic mechanisms involved in progression from alcohol use to abuse have yielded findings that suggest the value of this approach and support the notion of a genetic predisposition activated by factors such as stress (Pucci et al., 2019) and prenatal mechanisms that may affect the transmission of vulnerability to the effects of alcohol (Chastain & Sarkar, 2017).

Disease Models

The disease concept of alcoholism is a variation of the medical model, holding that people with problem drinking have the disease of alcoholism. Throughout history, isolated attempts have been made to describe alcohol intoxication as a disease brought about by the physical properties of alcohol.

The Disease Model This view became increasingly popular beginning in the late 1930s and the early 1940s. The American Medical Association accepted this model in 1956, and it remains a prominent view in psychiatric and other medically oriented treatment programs, especially in the United States (Barnett et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2010). The disease model is less influential in psychologically based treatment programs and in treatment programs in Canada, Europe, and Australia.

The disease model of alcoholism was elevated to scientific respectability by the pioneering work of E. M. Jellinek (1960), who described several different types of alcoholism and their characteristics. However, this model cast alcoholism as an incurable disease, which is too simplistic. Dissatisfaction with Jellinek's disease model led Griffith Edwards and his colleagues (Edwards, 1977; Edwards & Gross, 1976; Edwards et al., 1977) to advocate the alcohol dependency syndrome, which rejects the term *alcoholism*, substituting the term *alcohol dependency syndrome*. Rather than assert that alcoholics experience loss of control, Edwards and his colleagues proposed that those who are alcohol dependent have *impaired control*, suggesting that people drink heavily because they do not exercise control over their drinking. This concept has influenced the “official” one that forms the basis for a diagnosis of *alcohol use disorder*, the diagnosis that appears in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The Brain Disease Model During the 1990s a variation on the disease model, the brain disease model,

became a prominent view of problem drinking, especially in the United States (Barnett et al., 2017). This model arose from research using technological developments that allowed an examination of the neurobiology of drug effects and brain responses. Thus, the brain disease model focuses on brain processes as the foundation of alcohol use disorder as well as other drug use.

The brain disease model proposes that alcohol overuse (or other drugs) sets up a cascade of effects, which consists of three stages (Volkow et al., 2016). The first stage of use is *binge and intoxication*, during which the brain is flooded with pleasure-producing drug effects. These experiences are so powerful that they desensitize the brain to rewarding effects of normal experiences. The cascade continues, resulting in difficulties in feeling pleasure with normal levels of stimulation. The second stage is *withdrawal and negative affect*, which increases stress reactivity and feelings of depression and restlessness. These feelings prompt cravings for alcohol or other drugs to manage the distress and include the beginning of altered cognitive processes. Thoughts become focused on negative feelings and ways to escape them. The third stage is *preoccupation and anticipation*, which continues a conflict between urges to seek the drug and trying to stop using it. This weakened higher-level cognitive processing results in poor decisions and problems in self-regulation. **Table 13.2** describes the stages of this model.

Evaluation of the Disease Models Despite the widespread acceptance of the disease model of alcoholism and the current popularity of the brain disease model, the concept of alcoholism as a disease is difficult to validate with research that is clear in its application to these models. In addition, the disease model and the brain disease model fail to address our first question: Why do people begin to drink? The disease model's answer to the second question about why some people continue to drink at moderate levels is hardly adequate. People who are not alcoholic do not develop a dependence on alcohol. Those who defend the brain disease model contend that individual differences in susceptibility exist for alcohol or drug abuse, just as for other diseases, but these factors remain unidentified (Volkow et al., 2016).

One key concept in the disease models is loss of control or impaired control—the inability to stop or moderate alcohol intake once drinking begins. This concept has been difficult to define specifically, and research has not been consistent concerning its influence (Martin et al., 2006). G. Alan Marlatt and his colleagues

Table 13.2 Stages of the Brain Disease Model of Alcohol Use

Stage	Effect on the Brain	Effect on Behavior
Binge and Intoxication	Hyperactivation of brain reward centers through increased dopamine release	Conditions a connection between drug taking and the surrounding environment
Withdrawal and Negative Affect	Desensitization to reward and lower release of dopamine	Feelings of depression and restlessness, activating thoughts of drug seeking
Preoccupation and Anticipation	Decreased activity in prefrontal cortex	Increase impulsive behavior and decrease the ability to regulate behavior

Source: Volkow, N. D., Koob, G. F., & McLellan, A. T. (2016). Neurobiological advances from the brain disease model of addiction. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 374, 363–371. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMra1511480

(Marlatt et al., 1973; Marlatt & Rohsenow, 1980) have conducted experiments suggesting that many effects of alcohol, including impaired control, are due more to expectancy than to any pharmacological effect of alcohol. Their experimental design, called the balanced placebo design, included four groups, two of which expect to receive alcohol and two of which do not. Two groups actually receive alcohol, and two do not. **Figure 13.4** shows all four combinations.

Using the balanced placebo design, several studies (Marlatt et al., 1973; Marlatt & Rohsenow, 1980) showed that people who think they have received alcohol behave as though they have (whether they have or not). Even for those who had been in treatment for problem drinking, expectancy appeared to be the controlling factor in the craving for alcohol and in the amount consumed. These findings suggest that expectancy plays an important role in loss of control and craving for alcohol. A meta-analysis of studies on alcohol expectancy (McKay & Schare, 1999) confirmed that expectancy plays an important role in alcohol's effects.

Other investigators (Barnett et al., 2017; Peele, 2007; Quinn et al., 2004) have criticized disease models of alcohol, arguing that these models do not adequately consider environmental, cognitive, and affective determinants of abusive drinking; that is, in its emphasis on the physical properties of alcohol, the disease model neglects the cognitive and social learning aspects of drinking.

Cognitive-Physiological Theories

Of the various alternatives to the disease models, several emphasize the combination of physiological and cognitive changes that occur with alcohol use. Rather than hypothesize that alcohol use and misuse are based only on the chemical properties of alcohol and brain

changes that occur with use, these models contend that the cognitive changes experienced by drinkers also contribute to drinking behavior.

The Tension Reduction Hypothesis As the name suggests, the tension reduction hypothesis (Conger, 1956) holds that people drink alcohol because of its tension-reducing effects. This hypothesis has much intuitive appeal because alcohol is a sedative drug that leads to relaxation and slowed reactions.

Despite its consistency with popular belief, experimental studies have furnished limited support for the tension reduction hypothesis. Studies that have manipulated tension or anxiety to observe their effects on participants' readiness to consume alcohol have yielded contradictory results; some participants experience tension reduction, whereas others do not (Kambouropoulos, 2003). In more naturalistic settings (Frone, 2008; Moore et al., 2007), factors other than stress and tension have shown a stronger relationship to drinking. One factor that complicates assessment of the tension reduction hypothesis is expectancy. When people expect to experience tension reduction, they tend to get what they expect. A large-scale study in Germany (Pabst et al., 2010) found that tension reduction is one of the effects that drinkers expect. Thus, tension reduction is one of many effects that may occur as a result of drinking, but expectancy may be more important than alcohol in these effects.

The realization that alcohol's effects on physiological processes are not simple led to a reformulation of the tension reduction hypothesis. A group of researchers at Indiana University (Levenson et al., 1980; Sher, 1987; Sher & Levenson, 1982) discovered that high levels of alcohol consumption decrease the strength of responses to stress. They labeled this decrease the *stress response dampening (SRD) effect*. People who had been drinking

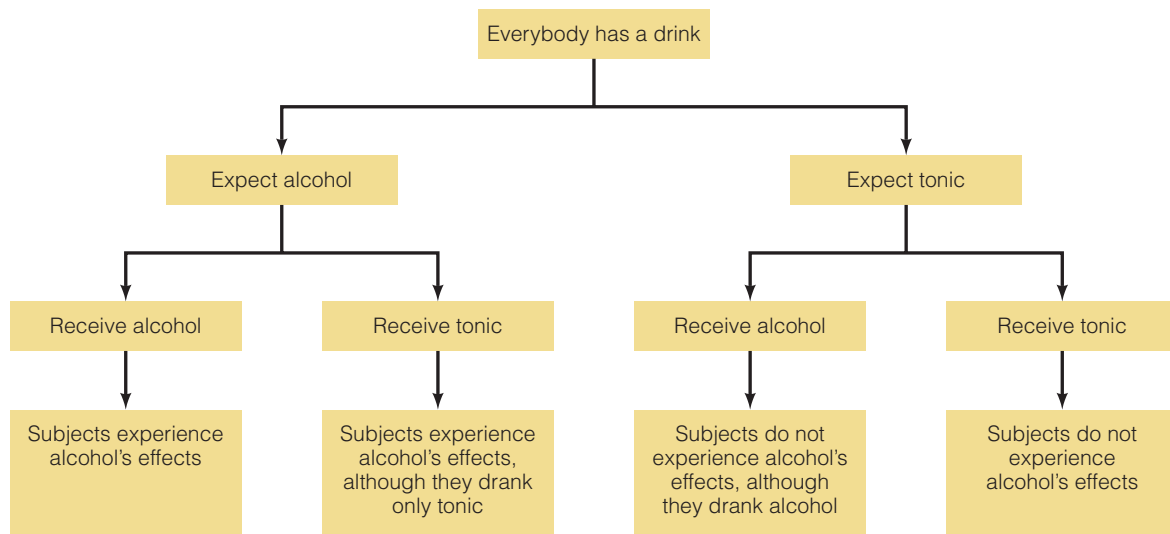


FIGURE 13.4 Balanced placebo design used in experiments on expectancy and alcohol effects.

did not respond as strongly as nondrinking participants to either physiological or psychological stressors. People whose personality profile suggested a high risk of developing problem drinking showed the strongest SRD effect, and those whose profile indicated a low risk showed a weaker effect (Sher & Levenson, 1982). This stress response–dampening effect appears in some drinkers but not in others (Zack et al., 2007) and more strongly at higher levels of intoxication (Donohue et al., 2007). In addition, stress response dampening tends to occur in social drinking situations (Armeli et al., 2003) and in situations with uncertain threats to a greater degree than more certain threat situations (Bradford et al., 2013). A meta-analysis of studies on this model (Bresin, 2019) found only limited support for this model. In addition, neither the original tension reduction hypothesis nor stress response dampening provides a general explanation for drinking, especially for initiating drinking.

Alcohol Myopia Claude Steele and his colleagues (Steele & Josephs, 1990) developed a model of alcohol use and abuse based on alcohol's psychological and physical properties. This model hypothesizes that alcohol use creates effects on social behaviors that they term *alcohol myopia*, that is, “a state of short-sightedness in which superficially understood, immediate aspects of experience have a disproportionate influence on behavior and emotion, a state in which we can see the tree, albeit more dimly, but miss the forest altogether”

(Steele & Josephs, 1990, p. 923). According to this view, alcohol blocks out insightful cognitive processing and alters thoughts related to the self, stress, and social anxiety.

Part of alcohol myopia is *drunken excess*, the tendency for those who drink to behave more excessively. This tendency appears as increased aggression, friendliness, sexiness, and many other exaggerated behaviors. Tendencies to behave in such extreme ways are usually inhibited, but when people drink, they experience less inhibition, and their behavior becomes more extreme. Under the influence of alcohol, people tend to focus on desirable aspects of a situation rather than reasonable or feasible ones (Sevincer & Oettingen, 2013).

Another aspect of alcohol myopia is *self-inflation*, a tendency to inflate self-evaluations. When asked to rate the importance of 35 trait dimensions for their real and ideal selves, drunken participants rated themselves higher on traits that were important to them and on which they had rated themselves low when sober (Banaji & Steele, 1989). Thus, drinking allowed participants to see themselves as better than they did when they were not drinking, confirming the ability of alcohol to inflate a person's self-evaluation.

A third aspect of alcohol myopia is *drunken relief* (Steele & Josephs, 1990); that is, people who drink tend to worry less and pay less attention to their worries. When consumed in large quantities, alcohol alone may produce drunken relief, but it can also affect behavior in smaller quantities. For example, women with low

self-esteem who drank alcohol interacted more with a flirtatious man after drinking than did similar women who had not been drinking and more than women with high self-esteem (Monahan & Lannutti, 2000). This finding suggests that drunken relief is not an effect entirely of alcohol but of alcohol in combination with other factors.

The alcohol myopia model has quite a bit of research support, including one study (Lac & Brack, 2018) that supported all three of this model's predictions. Intoxicated people tend to analyze information at a more superficial level, are more susceptible to distraction (Ortner, MacDonald, & Olmstead, 2003), and recall fewer details of a situation they have experienced (Villalba et al., 2011) than people who have not been drinking. For example, people playing an online gambling game became less focused on suggestions concerning how to maximize their winnings after they started drinking (Phillips & Ogeil, 2007).

In addition, alcohol myopia has offered a framework for interpreting a number of changes in sexual behavior that occur after drinking and also fits with behavior under the influence of other drugs (Noel et al., 2013). A review of the research on high-risk sexual behavior and alcohol (Griffin et al., 2010) indicated that college students' sexual decision making is affected by intoxication. Drinking leads people to focus on specific cues in the environment, which can lead to either more or less risky decisions. For example, when intoxicated men or women focus on their sexual feelings, they tend to be more willing to engage in risky sex than those who are not intoxicated. When similarly intoxicated people's attention is focused on the perils of risky sex, they tend to be less likely to engage in risky sex than those who are sober. That is, drinkers' tendency to process information in a limited way is influenced by what cues are present rather than by a general tendency for disinhibition. Thus, many studies offer strong research support for this model.

The Social Learning Model

The social learning model provides an explanation for why people begin to drink, why they continue to drink in moderation, and why some people drink in a harmful manner. This model conceptualizes drinking as learned behavior, acquired in the same manner as other behaviors.

According to the social learning theory, people begin to drink for at least three reasons. First, the taste of

alcohol and its immediate effects may bring pleasure (positive reinforcement). Second, drinking may allow a person to escape from an unpleasant situation (negative reinforcement). Third, the person may learn to drink through observing others (modeling). Research offers support for each of these possibilities.

First, research from countries around the world (Bergmark & Kuendig, 2008) found positive expectations for alcohol consumption. The reasons for drinking among college students in the United States (Holt et al., 2013; Read et al., 2005) and in the United Kingdom (Orford et al., 2004) also support the role of positive reinforcement, revealing that interpersonal factors, such as social interaction and mood enhancement, are key reasons for drinking. Students who experienced positive effects because of drinking expected more positive effects and were more likely to drink the next day (Lee et al., 2018). For individuals who do not drink, social influences are also important; lifetime abstainers tended to report that they had no interest in drinking or that their religion or upbringing influenced them to abstain (Bernards et al., 2009).

Second, modeling and social pressure are related to increases in drinking among young people. Students who were heavier drinkers put themselves in situations to receive different pressures than did students who drank less (Orford et al., 2004), and adolescents in New Zealand showed a pattern of reciprocal social influence among those whose drinking escalated (McDonough et al., 2016). A combination of modeling and expectancies of the effects of alcohol are the mechanisms hypothesized to underlie the transmission of drinking from



College social gatherings may encourage binge drinking.

KG Design/Shutterstock.com

parents to children (Campbell & Oei, 2010). People who are heavy drinkers also tend to associate with other people who have similar drinking patterns. Thus, modeling offers explanations for both the initiation of drinking and the tendency of some people to drink to excess.

A third explanation for excessive drinking offered by the social learning model is based on the principles of negative reinforcement. Dropping alcohol levels creates discomfort, and ingesting more alcohol relieves this discomfort. This process fits with the definition of negative reinforcement and provides another explanation for continuing to drink (Lowman et al., 2000).

Social learning theory provides an explanation for why people start drinking, why some continue to drink in moderation, and why others become problem drinkers. In addition, social learning theory suggests a variety of treatment techniques to help people overcome excessive drinking habits. The treatment rationale holds that if drinking behavior is learned, then it can be unlearned or relearned, with either abstinence or moderation as a goal of therapy.

IN SUMMARY

The question of why people drink has three components: (1) Why do people begin drinking? (2) Why do some people drink in moderation? (3) Why do others drink to excess? Theories of drinking behavior should be able to offer explanations in response to each of these questions. This section discussed three theories or models, each of which has some potential explanatory ability. The disease model assumes that people drink excessively because they have the disease of alcoholism. The brain disease model is a revision of the disease model that explains drinking (and other drug abuse) as a cascade of situations that affect the brain and the ability to regulate behaviors related to use. Cognitive-physiological models, including the tension reduction hypothesis and alcohol myopia, propose that people drink because alcohol produces alterations in cognitive function that allow them to escape tension or process information differently. Social learning theory hypothesizes that people acquire drinking behavior the same way that they learn other behaviors—that is, through positive or negative reinforcement and modeling. All three models offer some explanation of why some people continue to drink, but only social learning theory addresses all three components of drinking.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Examine the factors that are risks for developing problem drinking and describe how at least one applies to your drinking.
2. Choose two people whom you know who drink alcohol regularly and analyze which model of alcohol use fits best.

13-7 Changing Problem Drinking

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 13-9** Evaluate the evidence indicating that problem drinkers can change their behavior without entering a treatment program
- 13-10** Evaluate the evidence of success for treatments oriented toward abstinence
- 13-11** Evaluate the evidence for the effectiveness and risks of controlled drinking
- 13-12** Analyze the success of relapse prevention efforts, considering the differing goals of abstinence and moderation

The percentage of drinkers in the United States (about 51%) and the number of people who sought help for problem drinking (2.3 million) has remained stable over the past decade (SAMHSA, 2019). Men outnumber women by a ratio of more than 2:1. Women are more reluctant than men to seek treatment, and they may also seek treatment from sources that specialize in mental health treatment rather than alcohol treatment. Outpatient treatment is more common than inpatient treatment, but the most common form of treatment is attendance at a self-help group (SAMHSA, 2019). Private, for-profit facilities emphasize inpatient treatment, but these programs may have benefits that are limited to people with the most serious problems, and the costs are much higher. Cost is a factor in treatment; almost half of those who needed but failed to receive treatment cited cost not covered by insurance as the most

important factor (SAMHSA, 2019). Although adequate treatment is important for changing drinking behavior, some individuals with drinking problems can quit without formal treatment (Hodgins, 2005; Scarscelli, 2006).

Change Without Therapy

Some problems (and some diseases) disappear without formal treatment, and problem drinking is no exception. When a disease disappears without treatment, **spontaneous remission**, *natural recovery*, and *unassisted change* are terms used to describe this process. Even these terms may be somewhat misleading because people who change their drinking patterns may have the help and support of many people, including family members, employers, and friends, but have not used a formal therapy program. The existence of spontaneous cases of change is not consistent with some of the models of drinking and present a puzzle to researchers (Heyman, 2013), but changes of this type do occur (Scarscelli, 2006; Toneatto, 2013). In a study of individuals diagnosed as alcohol dependent (Dawson et al., 2005), only 25% were still in that category one year later, 18% were abstinent, and another 18% had moderated their drinking to nonproblem levels. Heavy drinkers who change their drinking behavior may be those who are less dependent (Cunningham et al., 2005); others may need professional help or the assistance of traditional groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

Presently, nearly all treatment programs in the United States are oriented toward abstinence, but programs in other countries may be oriented toward harm reduction rather than abstinence and allow for the possibility that some problem drinkers can become moderate drinkers.

Treatments Oriented Toward Abstinence

All formal treatments—even those that permit the possibility of resuming drinking—seek immediate abstinence as a goal. This section examines several treatment programs aimed at total and permanent abstinence.

Alcoholics Anonymous AA is one of the most widely used alcohol treatment programs, and it is often a component in other treatment programs. Founded in 1935 by two former alcoholics, AA has become the best known of all approaches to problem drinking. The organization follows a very strict version of the disease

model and combines it with an emphasis on spirituality that is designed to bring the problem drinker into the group to receive support and mentoring from others who have experienced similar problems.

To adhere to the AA doctrine, a person must maintain total abstinence from alcohol. Part of the AA philosophy is that those who are in need of joining AA can never drink again; problem drinkers are addicted to alcohol and have no power to resist it. According to AA, alcoholics never recover but are always in the process of recovering. They will be alcoholics for life, even if they never take another drink.

AA and other 12-Step programs have attained a high level of acceptance. Each year, over 2 million people in the United States attend a self-help program such as AA for drinking or other substance use problems (SAMHSA, 2019). Many of those individuals—perhaps as many as 75%—attend AA meetings (Magura, 2007).

The anonymity offered to those who attend AA meetings presents barriers to researchers wishing to conduct studies on the effectiveness of this program, but over the past 30 years, research has occurred. John Kelly and his colleagues (Kelly et al., 2011; 2016) conducted research on the value of the supportive alliances that form between sponsors and problem drinkers and how those relationships may replace harmful social connections that may encourage drinking. Recently, a meta-analysis of studies on AA and other 12 Step Programs evaluated the effectiveness of these programs and found success rates similar to other types of interventions (Kelley et al., 2020).

Alternative self-help organizations predate the development of AA and continue to proliferate around the world (White, 2004). Organizations such as Secular Organizations for Sobriety, Women for Sobriety, Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART Recovery), Rational Recovery, and Moderation Management offer the value of support and group discussions with different philosophies than AA. For example, some do not insist on the goal of lifetime abstinence. Online groups available through the Internet offer easier access, making group support more accessible.

Psychotherapy Nearly as many psychotherapeutic techniques have been used to treat alcohol abuse as there are psychotherapies, but some are not very effective in helping problem drinkers, whereas other techniques are much more so. Many varieties of behavioral therapy exist, and cognitive behavioral therapies have the most consistent research evidence as

to their effectiveness (Ray et al., 2019). These therapies tend to be more effective than less directive approaches such as education about alcohol or counseling (CASA Columbia, 2012; Marlatt & Witkiewitz, 2010). Brief interventions becoming more popular and can also be effective, especially for less severe cases (Ray et al., 2019). These techniques are designed to change motivation and may last for only a few hours, but the brevity of the intervention is an advantage.

An example of both a brief intervention and one oriented toward changing motivation is motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Therapists using motivational interviewing convey their empathy with the client's situation and help clients resolve their ambivalence about their problem behavior. This process is designed to move clients toward change, making this approach a directive type of psychological intervention. Linking motivational interviewing to the transtheoretical model (see Chapter 4) provides a framework for understanding and promoting behavioral change. Reviews of motivational interviewing (Lundahl et al., 2010; Rubak et al., 2005) have revealed the effectiveness of this intervention. In addition to the behavioral approaches that can be effective, some chemical treatments can also be useful in controlling problem drinking.

Chemical Treatments Many treatment programs for problem drinking include administering drugs that reduce the urge to drink. As of 2020, only three drugs have U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approval for treating alcohol use disorder, but drugs approved for other disorders are sometimes also used, including a variety of drugs approved for mental disorders and seizures (Ray et al., 2019). The effectiveness of these off-label drugs is less than for the FDA-approved drugs. Two of the approved drugs reduce the reward experience of drinking, and the third produces unpleasant symptoms when combined with alcohol.

Naltrexone is a drug that attaches to opiate receptors in the brain and prevents their activation, decreasing the pleasure from drinking alcohol. The drug acamprosate affects the neurotransmitter GABA, but its specific action that affects alcohol intake is not well understood (Ray et al., 2019). Both drugs may be successful in decreasing craving and increase the chances of achieving abstinence (Carmen et al., 2004). A systematic review of studies on naltrexone as a treatment for alcoholism (Rösner et al., 2010) revealed that the effects were modest but positive; additional studies support that finding (Ray et al., 2019). Acamprosate's

effect is also modest. Both drugs are more useful in preventing relapse than helping people quit, and both are more effective when combined with some behavioral intervention (CASA Columbia, 2012).

Disulfiram (Antabuse) produces a few unpleasant effects when taken alone, but in combination with alcohol, the unpleasant effects are severe: flushing of the face, chest pains, a pounding heart, nausea and vomiting, sweating, headache, dizziness, weakness, difficulty in breathing, and a rapid decrease in blood pressure. The rationale behind the use of these drugs is to produce an aversion to drinking by building up an association between drinking and the unpleasant consequences. This process, called **aversion therapy**, applies to the use of disulfiram as well as other methods that involve aversive conditioning. Getting people to take a drug that will make them sick if they drink is a challenge, and disulfiram is only modestly successful in treating problem drinkers (Krishnan-Sarin et al., 2008).

Controlled Drinking

Until the late 1960s, all treatments for problem drinking were aimed at total abstinence. Then something quite unexpected happened. In 1962 in London, D. L. Davies found that 7 of the 93 recovered alcoholics whom he studied were able to drink “normally” (defined as consumption of up to 3 pints of beer or its equivalent per day) for at least a seven-year period following treatment. These moderate drinkers represented fewer than 8% of those Davies studied, but this finding was still remarkable because it opened up the possibility that problem drinkers could successfully return to nonproblem drinking. This finding provoked a controversy that continues today.

Prompted by Davies's results, several studies conducted in the United States (Armor et al., 1976; Polich et al., 1980) showed that controlled drinking occurred in a small percentage of patients who received treatment oriented toward abstinence. Publicity about this study produced a wave of criticism from those holding the position that alcoholics can never drink again, and this controversy became more heated when researchers began to design treatment programs with controlled drinking as the goal.

Problem drinkers can become moderate drinkers. Some problem drinkers in abstinence-oriented treatment programs become moderate drinkers (Miller et al., 2001; Sobell et al., 1996; Witkiewitz et al., 2017), and some who quit on their own moderate their

drinking (Dawson et al., 2005). Despite the evidence concerning controlled drinking, most treatment centers in the United States have resisted the possibility that former problem drinkers can learn to moderate their use of alcohol and stick to the goal of abstinence. This attitude does not extend to other countries; in England, Wales, and Scotland, nearly all treatment centers endorse the goal of harm reduction and accept continued drinking among those who have experienced drinking problems. The goal is to reduce the harm that often accompanies drinking rather than eliminate drinking itself (Heather, 2006; Mann et al., 2017; Rosenberg & Melville, 2005). In the United States, younger substance abuse professionals have attitudes that are more compatible with a harm reduction approach (Davis & Lauritsen, 2016), so the acceptance of moderated drinking may gain acceptance in this country as it has in others.

The thought of being able to continue drinking is appealing to most drinkers, including those whose drinking is problematic (Kosok, 2006). This appeal is one reason for the creation of a self-help group oriented toward moderating drinking, called Moderation Management. This group includes face-to-face and online meetings, and research on this approach (Hester et al., 2011) showed that both formats could reduce problem drinking.

The Problem of Relapse

Problem drinkers who successfully complete either an abstinence-oriented or a moderation-oriented treatment program do not necessarily maintain their goals. As we saw with smoking, people who complete a treatment program usually improve quite a bit, but the problem of relapse is substantial. Interestingly, the time course and rate of relapse are similar for those who complete treatment programs for smoking, alcohol use, or opiate use (Hunt et al., 1971). Most relapses occur within 90 days after the end of the program. At 12 months after the end of treatment, only about 35% of those completing programs remain abstinent. These similarities may be attributable to the underlying brain mechanisms involved in habitual drug use, which share some similarities regardless of differences in the pharmacological properties of the drug (Camí & Farré, 2003).

A growing view in treatment holds that alcohol abuse is a chronic illness that requires continuing care (CASA Columbia, 2012; McKay & Hiller-Sturmhöfel, 2010). Thus, treatment programs should include provisions

for follow-up care to address relapse. Many inpatient treatment programs make such provisions through the requirement that participants attend AA meetings, which provide a supportive environment that discourages drinking and thus aims to deter relapse (Huebner & Kantor, 2011).

Most behavior-based treatment regimens include training for relapse prevention, taking the view that a relapse occurs in a complex environment with many sources of influence. Understanding those sources and knowing how to cope with their influence is critical; behavior change is not quick or easy (Witkiewitz & Marlatt, 2010). As discussed in Chapter 12, relapse prevention training is aimed at changing cognitions so that the addict comes to believe that one slip does *not* equal total relapse. Programs that focus on long-term goals and incorporate relapse prevention into their regimen tend to have the highest rates of success (McLellan et al., 2000).

One of the more recently developed techniques for relapse prevention is mindfulness-based relapse prevention. This approach is based on the same philosophy as other mindfulness-based techniques (see Chapter 5), tailored to substance use. This approach has shown some success in (Garland & Howard, 2018).

The statistics indicating a high rate of relapse are based on the goal of abstinence, but some researchers in the field of substance use question this goal (Witkiewitz & Tucker, 2020). If the standard is improvement and a lower level of problems caused by drinking, then relapse is not as common; as many as 60% of people who complete a treatment program achieve this level of success.

IN SUMMARY

Despite a decline in the percentage of drinkers in the United States, the number of people needing help for their drinking problems remains high. Some problem drinkers are able to quit without therapy, others seek treatment programs, but the biggest majority do not seek therapy and remain untreated. Traditional alcohol treatment programs—such as AA, the most widely sought treatment—are oriented toward abstinence. Many problem drinkers are not able to achieve this goal; only about 25% of problem drinkers are abstinent one year after treatment. Drinking levels typically drop substantially, however, and so do alcohol-related problems.

Some behavioral programs are successful, including brief interventions such as motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy; these brief interventions have become widespread. Chemical treatments such as the drugs naltrexone, acamprosate, and disulfiram can curb alcohol consumption but all show only modest levels of success.

Controlled drinking may be a reasonable goal for some problem drinkers. However, this goal is very controversial, and many abstinence-oriented therapists do not consider controlled drinking a viable alternative. Nonetheless, harm reduction rather than abstinence has become a more common goal for treatment programs.

With all alcohol treatment approaches, relapse has been a persistent problem. Relapse training has become a common component of both medically oriented and behaviorally oriented programs. Most drinkers who complete a program of treatment improve, but relapses to drinking are common within three months after the end of treatment. After 12 months, only 25% of those who complete programs are still abstinent, but a much greater percentage are drinking less.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. You have a close friend whose pattern of drinking fits the criteria for alcohol use disorder. Describe which type of treatment you would advise for your friend, along with the reasoning for your choice.
2. Your friend with problem drinking has finished the treatment program, but you fear relapse. Create a plan to minimize the risk of returning to problem drinking.

13-8 Other Drugs

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 13-13** Contrast the health effects of illicit drug use and those of the legally available drugs such as alcohol and tobacco
- 13-14** Differentiate drug use from drug abuse

Illicit drugs have created many serious problems, not only in the United States but also worldwide. However, the majority of these problems come from social and legal situations. Other drugs are not the major threat to physical health that alcohol and tobacco use are. Indeed, the effects of smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, eating unwisely, and remaining sedentary are responsible for over 60% of deaths in the United States; deaths attributable to illicit drug use account for 2.6% of deaths (Kochanek et al., 2019). Any death from illicit drugs is unfortunate, but all drug use—even legal drug use—poses risks. Part of that risk comes from alterations of brain function.

Researchers are beginning to understand how drugs function in the brain to alter mood and behavior. Alcohol and other drugs produce effects on neurotransmitters, the chemical basis of neural transmission. Several neurotransmitters are involved in drug actions, including GABA, glutamate, serotonin, and norepinephrine (López-Moreno et al., 2008), but the neurotransmitter **dopamine** is especially important (Young et al., 2011). Dopamine may be the most important neurotransmitter in a brain subsystem that relays messages from the ventral tegmental area in the midbrain to the nucleus accumbens in the forebrain. Researchers have known for years that this area is involved in the brain's experience of reward and pleasure. However, the actions of many drugs seem to be common to the same system, not only in these two brain structures but also in the hippocampus, amygdala, and forebrain (López-Moreno et al., 2008). That is, drugs seem to activate the brain circuits that underlie reward. Indeed, experiences such as gambling or eating may activate the same brain mechanisms (Martin & Petry, 2005; Volkow et al., 2017).

All psychoactive drugs do not act in the same way in this subsystem, but all affect the availability of neurotransmitters, especially dopamine. Alterations of these neurotransmitters produce temporary changes in brain chemistry but rarely damage neurons. Changing the brain's chemistry carries risks, but brain damage is not a health effect associated with most drugs (see the Would You Believe . . . ? box).

Health Effects

Even though most drugs do not damage neurons, both legal and illegal drugs pose potential health hazards. However, illegal drugs present certain risks not found with legal drugs, regardless of pharmacological effects.

Would You BELIEVE...?

Brain Damage Is Not a Common Risk of Drug Use

Despite the vivid media images of a brain “fried” by drug use, most psychoactive drugs do not cause damage to neurons. Indeed, some of the drugs that can most wreck a person’s life are among the *least* likely to damage the brain. For example, opiate drugs such as heroin, morphine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone produce both tolerance and dependence. Repeated use of these drugs results in compulsive drug taking and a pattern of use in which social relationships and responsibilities become unimportant. People who are dependent on opiate drugs usually experience major problems, but brain damage is not among them.

Like other psychoactive drugs, opiates cross the blood–brain barrier, where they occupy receptors for endorphins, the body’s own analgesics (Advokat, Comaty, & Julien, 2018). Thus, these drugs are compatible with the brain’s existing neurochemistry; they occupy these receptors without causing damage. Their repeated use produces a host of physiological effects, some of which can be very dangerous, but damage to the nervous system is unlikely.

Marijuana also acts by occupying brain receptors for neurochemicals called endocannabinoids (Pope et al., 2010). The discovery of these neurochemicals suggested that the brain makes its own marijuana-like chemicals and also explained some of the actions that marijuana takes in the brain. Marijuana also produces a wide variety of physiological and behavioral effects, some of which are dangerous and some of which are beneficial (Pacher et al., 2020). However, those effects do not include damage to neurons in the brain.

Both publicity and public service announcements have decried the dangers of the drug Ecstasy, but the researcher withdrew the study that formed the basis for these claims because of inaccuracies (Holden, 2003). Thus, Ecstasy may not pose the risk to life that some feared (Cole, 2014). Like all drugs, this one is not without dangers (Halpern et al., 2011), but research indicates no structural or functional brain change with moderate use (Mueller et al., 2016). However, combinations with alcohol or stimulants may be riskier (Gouzoulis-Mayfrank & Daumann, 2006).

However, some drugs do carry risks of damage to the nervous system. Those risks typically occur with heavy, long-term use to those who fit into the category of abusers. For example, the potential for brain damage as a result of extended alcohol abuse is well established (Harper & Matsumoto, 2005). Some evidence has also suggested that the abuse of stimulants such as cocaine (Rosenberg et al, 2002) and amphetamines (Chang et al., 2002) produces toxic neurological effects. The evidence for brain damage from the use of household solvents is strong (Rosenberg et al., 2002). These chemicals act to alter consciousness not through changes to neurotransmitters but through oxygen restriction to the brain, so, of course, these substances cause brain damage.

The greatest risks from drug use are not neurological damage but rather the ability of these drugs to alter perception, decision making, and coordination. These effects increase the risk for unintentional injuries, which are a far more likely result than brain damage.

Illegal drugs may be sold as one drug when they are actually another; buyers have no assurance as to dosage; and illegally manufactured drugs may have impurities that can be dangerous chemicals themselves. In addition, the sources of illegal drugs can be dangerous people. Legal drugs are free from these risks, but they are not harmless and not always safe.

All drugs have potential hazards, but drugs termed *safe* are tested by the U.S. FDA and defined as safe when potential benefits outweigh potential hazards. Many drugs, such as antibiotics, have been approved although they produce severe side effects in some people. The more potentially beneficial a drug is, the more likely it is

to be labeled *safe* despite unpleasant or even dangerous side effects.

The FDA classifies drugs into five categories, based on their potential for abuse and their potential medical benefits. **Table 13.3** summarizes this schedule, presents the restrictions on availability, and gives examples of drugs in each category. This classification has evolved somewhat haphazardly over more than 100 years and represents legislative and social convention rather than scientific findings.

A classification of drugs based on the action of the drugs is more useful than a classification based on legal availability. A classification according to the effects of

TABLE 13.3 FDA Drug Schedules, Restrictions, and Examples of Drugs in Each Category

Schedule	Description	Restriction on Availability	Examples
I	High abuse potential; no medical uses	Not legally available under U.S. federal law	LSD, marijuana, heroin
II	High abuse potential but with medical uses	Prescription only	Morphine, oxycontin, barbiturates, amphetamines, cocaine
III	Moderate or low dependence; medical uses	Prescription only	Codeine, some tranquilizers
IV	Low dependence, low abuse potential; medical uses	Prescription only	Phenobarbital, most tranquilizers
V	Less abuse potential than drugs in Schedule IV	Over the counter	Aspirin, antacids, antihistamines, and others

the drugs would have major sections for sedatives, stimulants, hallucinogens, marijuana, and anabolic steroids. **Sedatives** are drugs that induce relaxation and sometimes intoxication by lowering the activity of the brain, neurons, muscles, and heart, and even by slowing the metabolic rate (Advokat et al., 2018). The types of drugs classified as sedatives include barbiturates, tranquilizers, opiates, and alcohol. In low doses, these drugs tend to make people feel relaxed and even euphoric. In high doses, they cause loss of consciousness and can produce coma and death as a result of their inhibitory effect on the part of the brain that controls respiration. These risks represent the most common hazards of sedative use. Table 13.4 shows the types of drugs that fit into this category, their effects, and their risks.

Stimulants are another main category of psychoactive drugs. All drugs in the stimulant category tend to produce alertness, reduce feelings of fatigue, elevate mood, and decrease appetite. Stimulant drugs include caffeine, nicotine, amphetamines, and cocaine. Caffeine, found in coffee, tea, and many types of sodas, is so widely consumed that many people do not think of it as a drug, but it produces the effects typical of stimulant drugs; consistent use results in dependence, and cessation produces withdrawal symptoms. **Amphetamines** are a class of powerful stimulant drug that includes methamphetamines and crystal methamphetamine that are often abused because of their mood-altering effects. Another stimulant drug, **cocaine**, is extracted from the coca plant. Cocaine is sold in powder form and as crack cocaine, which can be smoked. Using cocaine in combination with alcohol enhances the dangers of each drug by producing a third chemical, *cocaethylene* (Hearn

et al., 1991; Shimomura et al., 2019). This chemical is hazardous and may boost the user’s risk for cardiac problems (Tacker & Okorodudu, 2004). **Table 13.4** also summarizes these drugs and their characteristics.

Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA)—Ecstasy—is a derivative of methamphetamine, but people use it for its mild hallucinogenic effects, including feelings of peace and empathy with others. These feelings come from a massive release of the neurotransmitter *serotonin*, which depletes the supply of serotonin, but this depletion tends to be temporary (Buchert et al., 2004), if confined to low or moderate use (Mueller et al., 2016). Other hallucinogenic drugs such as lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), mescaline, and psilocybin exert more complex effects on neurotransmitters, but serotonin is also involved in the effects of these drugs (Halberstadt & Geyer, 2011). Although these drugs are classified as having no medical benefits, there is a growing interest in their potential as a useful component of treatment for several mental disorders (Barnett et al., 2018).

Marijuana has some hallucinogenic properties but lacks most other characteristics of hallucinogens. The primary intoxicating ingredient in marijuana, delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), comes from the resin of the *Cannabis sativa* plant. The brain contains receptors for cannabinoids in many locations, which results in a variety of effects from ingesting marijuana, including altered thought processes, memory impairment, feelings of relaxation and euphoria, increased appetite, and impaired coordination (Chadi et al., 2018; Nicoll & Alger, 2004). Its potential for serious health consequences is still debated, as are its medical benefits.

TABLE 13.4 Summary of Characteristics of Psychoactive Drugs

Name	Tolerance	Dependence	Effects	Risks
Sedatives/Depressants				
Barbiturates	Yes	Yes	Relaxes, intoxicates	Unconsciousness, coma, death
Tranquilizers	Yes	Yes	Relaxes, intoxicates	Altered judgment, impaired coordination, coma
Opiates and Opioids heroin, morphine, oxycodone, hydrocodone	Yes	Yes	Produces analgesia, euphoria, sedation	Coma, respiratory arrest, death
Alcohol	Yes	Yes	Relaxes, intoxicates	Impaired judgment and coordination, unconsciousness
Stimulants				
Caffeine	Yes	Yes	Increased alertness, reduced fatigue	Increased nervousness
Cocaine	Yes	Yes	Euphoria, suppressed appetite	Heart arrhythmia, heart attack
Amphetamines (methamphetamine, crystal meth)	Yes	Yes	Produces alertness, reduces fatigue	Heart attack, feelings of paranoia, increased violence
Nicotine (tobacco products)	Yes	Yes	Increases alertness, decreases appetite, elevates blood pressure	Increased heart disease and cancer
Hallucinogens				
Ecstasy (MDMA)	No	No	Produces feelings of well-being	Temperature regulation problems
LSD	No	No	Produces perceptual distortions, intoxicates	Altered perception and judgment
Marijuana				
Marijuana	No	Possibly	Relaxes, intoxicates	Impaired judgment, coordination, respiratory problems (if smoked)
Steroids				
Anabolic steroids	Yes	No	Builds muscles, increases blood pressure, reduces immune system functioning	Testicular atrophy, increased aggression, lowered immune function



BECOMING HEALTHIER

1. Avoid binge drinking—that is, drinking five or more drinks on any one occasion. There are no health benefits associated with binge drinking, and there are many risks.

Action Plan: Make a list of the places and situations that you encounter where binge drinking is common, and then write down some strategies to cope with invitations to these places.

2. One or two drinks per day can impair judgment and coordination. These dangers are the biggest risk of alcohol consumption, and people who drink should find ways to manage this risk.

Action Plan: Write down three risky situations that may (or have) occurred in your life. Devise a plan to avoid the riskiest aspects of these three situations.

3. Do not drive, operate machinery, or swim after drinking.

Action Plan: Prepare refusals for situations in which these risky behaviors might occur in your life and practice using them so that you will be prepared when the situations arise.

4. Do not escalate your drinking; keep to one or two drinks per

day (not an average of one or two).

Action Plan: Keep a diary of your alcohol intake for at least two weeks so that you will have some data to confirm your alcohol intake.

5. The safest level of alcohol for pregnant women is none.

Action Plan: Prepare a brief presentation on the harmful effects of drinking on a developing fetus and attempt to give this presentation to a group.

6. If one or both of your parents experienced drinking problems, you may be at elevated risk. Manage this risk by moderating your drinking or by not drinking.

Action Plan: Trace your family's drinking behavior to understand not only your parents' level of consumption but also other relatives.

7. If you have had an extremely pleasant experience with any drug (including alcohol) the first time you try it, be aware that future use of this drug may present problems for you.

Action Plan: Write about your first experiences with at least three drugs and reflect on how the advice included in this item applies to you.

8. Don't combine drugs; drugs in combination are more dangerous than taking one drug.

Action Plan: Research information on drug interactions and the potential hazards of mixing drugs, including some of the most common combinations, such as alcohol and caffeine, marijuana and alcohol, or nicotine and alcohol.

9. Drugs that produce dependence are more dangerous than those that do not. Even if you have a prescription, be aware and cautious about using alcohol and nicotine as well as opiates, barbiturates, and amphetamines.

Action Plan: Research information about the tolerance and dependence potential of any drugs that you take, including legal and illegal drugs, so that you can understand the risks involved with taking any drug.

10. Illegal drugs, even those without tolerance or dependence potential, can be dangerous because they are illegal.

Action Plan: Avoid people or situations that include illegal drugs.

A growing body of evidence supports a variety of medical benefits of marijuana (Koppel et al., 2014), and growing public acceptance has resulted in an increasing number of states passing “medical marijuana” laws that allow access to marijuana for those who have a prescription in addition to an increasing number of states that have legalized recreational marijuana use. Despite this growing acceptance, like all drug use, marijuana use poses risks. Its effects on cognition, judgment, and coordination boost the risk of unintentional injuries. In addition, users who smoke marijuana face increased

risks for respiratory problems and possibly even lung cancer (Joshi, Joshi, & Bartter, 2014).

Anabolic steroids (ASs) are synthetic hormones used to enhance athletic performance (King & Pace, 2005). The effects of anabolic steroids include thickening of the vocal cords, enlargement of the larynx, increase of muscle bulk, and decrease of body fat. These last two properties make ASs attractive to athletes, bodybuilders, and people who wish to alter their appearance. Unfortunately, use of anabolic steroids can upset the chemical balance in the body, produce



Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug, with higher use among adolescents and young adults.

David Young-Wolff/PhotoEdit

toxicity, and shut off the body's production of its own steroids, leaving the person more susceptible to stress and infection and altering reproductive functioning. In addition, behavioral problems include aggression, euphoria, mood swings, distractibility, and confusion. Table 13.4 presents a summary of anabolic steroids and other psychoactive drug characteristics.

How common is the use of these illicit drugs? Is drug use increasing or decreasing? Illicit drug use in the United States has varied over the past 45 years, reaching a peak in the late 1970s, followed by a decline in the 1980s (Johnston et al., 2020). Another increase occurred in the early 1990s and another decrease in the late 1990s. This overall pattern is similar across age groups, but levels of use are not; young people use illicit drugs more often than older people. Indeed, trends in

drug use among high school students often predict societal drug use several years later.

Illicit drug use has varied little overall within the past decade, with fluctuations from year to year and from drug to drug (SAMHSA, 2019). (The use of alcohol and nicotine has also varied, but the percentage of people who use these legal drugs is higher than those who use illicit drugs.) Marijuana remains the most commonly used illicit drug, with levels of use far above any other type of illicit drug and increases related to the legalization in an increasing number of states. The next most commonly used classification is the nonmedical use of therapeutic drugs such as painkillers (oxycodone, hydrocodone), stimulants (methamphetamines), tranquilizers, and sedatives. Opioids remain among the more commonly used illicit drugs, although the use of these drugs has decreased. As Table 13.5 shows, the level of use of these drugs is much lower than marijuana use. Although these percentages represent occasional use by some people, some people misuse, while others abuse these drugs.

Drug Misuse and Abuse

Most people believe that some drugs are acceptable and even desirable because of the medical benefits they confer. But all *psychoactive* drugs—drugs that cross the blood–brain barrier and alter mental functioning—pose potential health risks. Most have the capacity for tolerance or dependence (see Table 13.4). Even drugs that are not psychoactive have the potential for unpleasant side effects. For example, penicillin can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, swelling, and skin eruptions. In addition, people who have allergies to penicillin can die from ingesting it. Caffeine, a drug commonly found in coffee and cola drinks, also creates dependence. A review of studies on caffeine withdrawal (Juliano & Griffiths, 2004) confirmed that people who habitually consume caffeine experience withdrawal symptoms that include headache, difficulty concentrating, and depressed mood. These risks are less serious than the substance use disorders listed in *DSM-5* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), but all drug use carries some risks.

Almost all drugs that have potential medical or health benefits also have the potential for misuse and abuse. The moderate use of alcohol, for instance, is related to decreased cardiovascular mortality. The *misuse* of alcohol—defined as inappropriate but not health-threatening levels of consumption—can result

TABLE 13.5 Lifetime, Past Year, and Past Month Use of Various Drugs, Including Nonmedical Use of Legal Drugs, Persons Aged 12 Years and Older, United States, 2018

Drug	Lifetime Use (%)	Use During Past Year (%)	Use During Past Month (%)
Alcohol	80.8	65.5	51.1
Cigarettes	55.7	21.0	17.2
Smokeless tobacco	15.6	4.0	2.9
Sedatives	—	0.4	0.1
Tranquilizers	—	2.1	0.6
Heroin	1.9	0.3	0.1
Pain relievers	—	3.6	1.0
Opioids	—	3.7	1.1
Stimulants	—	3.6	1.0
Cocaine	14.7	2.0	0.7
Crack cocaine	3.4	0.3	0.2
Marijuana	45.3	15.9	10.1
LSD	10.0	0.8	0.2
Ecstasy	7.3	0.9	0.3

Source: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables, by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2019, Table 1.1B and 2.1B. Retrieved from www.samhsa.gov/sites/files/NSDUHDetailedTabs201

in social embarrassment, violent acts, and injury. And abuse of alcohol—defined as frequent, heavy consumption to the point of dependence—can lead to cirrhosis, brain damage, heart attack, and fetal alcohol syndrome.

Not all individuals who use drugs or alcohol are equally likely to become abusers. Not only genetic but also situational factors contribute to the risks of substance abuse (Ahmed et al., 2020), and another major risk is the presence of psychopathology. Individuals with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder who use illicit drugs tend to have more severe symptoms and to respond more poorly to treatment than individuals with the same disorders who do not use illicit drugs (Chadi et al., 2018; Ringen et al., 2008).

Treatment for Drug Abuse

Treatment for the use and abuse of illegal drugs is similar to the treatment of alcohol abuse, both in the philosophy and in the administration of treatment (Schuckit, 2000). In the United States and many other countries, the goal of treatment for all types of illegal drug use is total abstinence. In many cases, the programs that treat drug abusers coexist physically (as well as philosophically) with treatment programs for alcohol abuse, and patients who are receiving treatment for

their drug problems participate in the same therapy as those who are receiving therapy for their alcohol problems. The philosophy that guides AA led to the development of Narcotics Anonymous, an organization devoted to helping drug users abstain from using drugs. Self-help groups are common components in treating drug abuse, as they are in dealing with alcohol abuse (Margolis & Zweben, 2011).

The reasons for entering drug abuse treatment programs are often similar to those for entering treatment for alcohol abuse, and those reasons are primarily social. The abuse of illegal drugs leads to legal, financial, and interpersonal problems, just as alcohol abuse does. Like alcohol, most illegal drugs produce impairments of judgment that lead to unintentional injury and death, making such injury the leading health risk from drug abuse. The abuse of most illegal drugs does not produce as many direct health hazards as alcohol abuse. However, when health problems occur, they are likely to be major and life threatening. Such crises may precipitate a person's decision to seek treatment or lead family members to enforce treatment.

Inpatient treatment programs for drug abuse differ from programs for alcohol abuse in several minor ways. The detoxification phase of inpatient hospitalization is

typically shorter and less severe for most types of drug use than it is for alcohol, for which withdrawal can be life threatening. Alcohol is a depressant drug, as are barbiturates, tranquilizers, and opiates. Therefore, all these drugs have similar symptoms during withdrawal, including agitation, tremor, gastric distress, and possibly perceptual distortions (Advokat et al., 2018). Stimulants such as amphetamines and cocaine produce different withdrawal symptoms—namely, lethargy and depression. These differences necessitate different medical care during detoxification.

After detoxification, additional care is important for success. Frequently, this continued care comes from joining a support group such as Narcotics Anonymous. Getting substance abusers to attend such groups is a challenge, and the low rate of success for such interventions is a problem. Other interventions show better results. A meta-analysis of psychosocial interventions (Dutra et al., 2008) identified several types as effective, including contingency management and cognitive behavioral therapy. Such interventions were most effective for people who used marijuana and least effective for those who abused several substances. Unfortunately, relapse prevention interventions were not among the more effective programs.

One similarity between drug and alcohol abuse treatment is the high rate of relapse. As noted earlier, alcohol, smoking, and opiate treatment all share a high rate of relapse (Hunt et al., 1971), and the first six months after treatment are critical, and some changes in thinking about substance use problems may lead to improvements. Recognizing substance abuse as a chronic problem is important to changes that will improve effectiveness (CASA Columbia, 2012). A one-size-fits-all approach may not be successful for relapse prevention because people relapse for different reasons (Zywiak et al., 2006). Some people are provoked to relapse by negative feelings, and others cannot withstand cravings, whereas others succumb to social pressure from their drug-using friends. Tailoring treatments to the needs of individuals has the potential to improve treatment success.

Preventing and Controlling Drug Use

Chapter 12 presented information on attempts to decrease smoking in children and adolescents by various interventions aimed at discouraging their experimentation with cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. Similar

efforts have been applied to the use of alcohol and other drugs (Botvin & Griffin, 2015; Lemstra et al., 2010; Stockings et al., 2016). The prevention attempts aimed at keeping children and adolescents from experimenting with drugs are intended to delay or inhibit the initiation of drug use. As with efforts to prevent smoking (see Chapter 12), those aimed at preventing drug use do not have an impressive success rate. Programs that rely on scare tactics, moral training, factual information about drug risks, and boosting self-esteem are generally ineffective (Stockings et al., 2016). For example, the popular Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program has minimal effects (West & O’Neal, 2004), but a revision of that program may be more successful (Caputi & McLellan, 2017).

However, some types of prevention programs are more effective than others. Programs that teach skills are more effective than those that only provide information (Stockings et al., 2016). For example, the Life Skills Training program (Botvin & Griffin, 2015) has demonstrated both short-term and long-term effectiveness. This program teaches social skills, both to resist social pressure to use drugs and to enhance decision-making skills as well as social and personal competence. In addition, some evidence (Springer et al., 2004) indicates that prevention programs that are tailored to be culturally compatible with the targeted groups are more effective than more general programs. Systematic reviews of prevention programs (Lemstra et al., 2010; Roe & Becker, 2005; Soole et al., 2008) have indicated that school programs that are interactive, intensive, and focus on life skills are more effective than programs that lack these components. Aiming prevention efforts at children aged between 11 and 13 is most effective, but programs aimed at children and adolescents are not the only approach to controlling drug use.

A more common control technique is to limit availability. This strategy is common in all Western countries through laws that limit legal access to drugs. However, legal restriction of drugs has a number of side effects, some of which create other social problems (Robins, 1995). For example, when the United States legally prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol, illegal manufacture and distribution flourished, creating a large criminal enterprise, huge profits, loss of tax revenue, and corruption among law enforcement agencies. Thus, limiting availability has negative as well as positive consequences, and the extent to which this approach should be continued is a controversy currently applicable to the availability of marijuana.

Another strategy is control of the harm of drug use. This strategy assumes that people will use psychoactive drugs, sometimes unwisely, but that reducing the health consequences of drug use should be the first priority (Heather, 2006; O'Hare, 2007; Peele, 2002). Rather than taking a moralistic stand on drug use, this strategy takes a practical approach to minimizing the dangers of drug use. Examples of the *harm reduction strategy* include helping injection drug users exchange used needles for sterile ones, thus slowing the spread of HIV infection, encouraging the designated driver approach to avoiding vehicle injuries, and offering methadone to individuals who use opiates to help them stay away from heroin. The controversy surrounding such programs is representative of the debate over the harm reduction strategy. However, a systematic review of harm reduction (Ritter & Cameron, 2006) concluded that the evidence indicates that this approach should be adopted as a policy for illicit drugs. Furthermore, some experts in the field (Des Jarlais, 2017; Gallagher & Bremer, 2018; Lee et al., 2011) have contended that the approaches oriented toward abstinence are not as incompatible with harm reduction as the controversy suggests. Both approaches should have a place in controlling drug use.

IN SUMMARY

Abuse of alcohol is a serious health problem in most developed nations, but other drugs—including depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, marijuana, and anabolic steroids—are also potentially harmful to health. Although abuse of these drugs often leads to a number of personal and social problems, their consumption levels are lower and thus health risks are much less than those associated with cigarettes or alcohol. Treatments for drug abuse are similar to those for alcohol abuse, and programs aimed at prevention are similar to those aimed at preventing smoking. A strategy of *harm reduction* aims at decreasing the social and health risks of taking drugs by changing treatment goals and drug policies.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Evaluate the drugs that you use, ranking them from least to most dangerous in terms of health risks. Be sure to include a rationale for your rankings.

Questions

This chapter has addressed six basic questions:

1. What are the major trends in alcohol consumption?

People have consumed alcohol worldwide since before recorded history. Alcohol consumption in the United States reached a peak during the early 1800s, dropped sharply during the mid-1800s because of the “temperance” movement, and continued at a steady rate until a sharp decline during Prohibition. Currently, rates of alcohol consumption in the United States are holding steady after a period of slow decline. About two-thirds of adults drink; half are classified as current, regular drinkers, including 25% as binge drinkers and 6% as heavy drinkers. Adult European Americans have higher rates of drinking than members of other ethnic groups, but the patterns of alcohol consumption vary in countries around the world.

2. What are the health effects of drinking alcohol?

Drinking has both positive and negative health effects. Prolonged heavy drinking of alcohol often

leads to cirrhosis of the liver and other serious health problems, such as heart disease and Korsakoff disease, a type of brain dysfunction. Moderate drinking may have certain long-range health benefits, including reduced heart disease and lowered probability of developing type 2 diabetes, and Alzheimer's disease, but these advantages apply only to middle-aged and older individuals who maintain a light level of drinking. Younger people experience no health benefits from alcohol intake. Overall, the risks of alcohol outweigh the benefits.

3. Why do people drink?

Models for drinking behavior should explain why people begin drinking, why some can drink in moderation, and why others drink to excess. The disease model assumes that people drink excessively because they have the disease of alcoholism, and the brain disease model contends that drug use changes the brain, producing malfunctions in mood, motivation, and behavior. Cognitive-physiological models, including the tension reduction hypothesis and alcohol myopia, propose that people drink because alcohol allows them

to escape tension and negative self-evaluations. Social learning theory proposes that people acquire drinking behavior through positive or negative reinforcement, modeling, and cognitive mediation. Research evidence supports a genetic component to problem drinking, which interacts with social and individual factors to push individuals toward abstinence, moderate, or problem drinking.

4. How can people change problem drinking?

Some problem drinkers seem to be able to quit without therapy, and treatment programs are moderately effective in helping people who are unable to quit on their own. In the United States and many other countries, most treatment programs are oriented toward abstinence, which is a difficult criterion to attain. Alcoholics Anonymous is the most popular treatment program, and the social support component can be effective in help some problem drinkers quit. Brief interventions oriented toward enhancing motivation, such as motivational interviewing, and cognitive behavioral interventions are more effective. Pharmacological treatments such as naltrexone, acamprosate, and disulfiram can also be useful components in a treatment program and are more effective when combined with behavioral techniques. The goal of harm reduction rather than abstinence is becoming a more accepted goal of treatment.

5. What problems are associated with relapse?

Relapse is common among heavy drinkers who have quit, although many are able to maintain abstinence or to decrease their alcohol intake. Most relapses occur during the first three months after quitting. After a year, about 65% of all successful quitters have resumed drinking, some in a harmful manner but some manage to drink moderately. The knowledge of frequent relapse has led to the creation of follow-up relapse prevention treatment and the growing opinion that problem drinking should be considered a chronic condition.

6. What are the health effects of other drugs?

Other drugs—including depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, marijuana, and anabolic steroids—have had some medical use, but they are also potentially harmful to health. The principal problems from most of these drugs are social, but the use of any drug brings physical risks, which may include coma, heart attack, or respiratory failure. Treatments for drug abuse are similar to those for

alcohol abuse, and programs aimed at prevention are similar to those aimed at preventing smoking.

Suggested Readings

- Botvin, G. J., & Griffin, K. W. (2015). Life Skills Training: A competence enhancement approach to tobacco, alcohol, and drug abuse prevention. In L. M. Scheier (Ed.), *Handbook of adolescent drug use prevention: Research, intervention strategies, and practice* (pp. 177–196). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. This chapter summarizes the components of one successful prevention program and the evidence for its effectiveness.
- Herman, M. A., & Roberto, M. (2015). The addicted brain: Understanding the neurophysiological mechanisms of addictive disorders, *Frontiers in Integrative Neuroscience*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnint.2015.00018>. This article details the brain mechanisms that underlie reward and addiction, pointing out the commonalities among all compulsive drug use.
- Rehm, J., Baliunas, D., Borges, G. L. G., Graham, K., Irving, H., Kehoe, T., Parry, C. D., Patra, J., Popova, S., Poznyak, V., Roerecke, M., Room, R., Samokhvalov, A., & Taylor, B. (2010). The relation between different dimensions of alcohol consumption and burden of disease: An overview. *Addiction*, 105(5), 817–843. This review presents a comprehensive view of the harm that alcohol does in creating disease, including an examination of the pathways through which alcohol creates disease and the patterns of drinking that are most dangerous.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2019). *Key substance and mental health indicators in the United States: Results from the 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. (HHS Publication No. PEP19-50682019.) Rockville, MD: Author. This review of the key findings from a recent survey of substance use in the United States presents statistics on a range of drug use and changes in use.
- Witkiewitz, K., & Tucker, I. A. (2020). Abstinence not required: Expanding the definition of recovery from alcohol use disorder. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 44(1), 36–40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/acer.14235>. These researchers present an interesting argument on some of the disadvantages of demanding abstinence from problem drinkers.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 14-1** Trace the route of digestion, noting the role of each of the major organs
- 14-2** Explain the weight maintenance equation, including the role of leptin, ghrelin, and cholecystokinin
- 14-3** Analyze how ethnicity and location in the world influence the prevalence of obesity
- 14-4** Explain how the food environment is a stronger factor in obesity than genetic factors
- 14-5** Defend either the set-point model or the positive incentive model of weight. In your argument, be sure to include evidence from the experiments on experimental starvation and experimental overeating
- 14-6** Analyze the relationship between weight and poor health, including both obesity and extreme thinness
- 14-7** Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of three different dieting strategies
- 14-8** Evaluate the importance of physical activity in a weight-loss program
- 14-9** Describe the necessary behaviors for someone who has lost weight to maintain the loss
- 14-10** Discuss three disadvantages of dieting
- 14-11** Compare the symptoms and dangers of anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating
- 14-12** Discuss two psychological factors that make treatment for anorexia difficult
- 14-13** Construct profiles of someone who is at high risk for each of the three eating disorders, making sure to include family and personal background, gender, personal attitudes that increase the risk for each disorder
- 14-14** Compare treatment effectiveness for anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder

CHAPTER 14

Eating and Weight

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Danny Cahill

The Digestive System

Factors in Weight Maintenance

Experimental Starvation

- Experimental Overeating

Overeating and Obesity

- What Is Obesity?
- Why Are Some People Obese?
- How Unhealthy Is Obesity?

Dieting

- Approaches to Losing Weight
- Is Dieting a Good Choice?

Eating Disorders

- Anorexia Nervosa
- Bulimia
- Binge Eating Disorder

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on six basic questions:

1. How does the digestive system function?
2. What factors are involved in weight maintenance?
3. What is obesity, and how does it affect health?
4. Is dieting a good way to lose weight?
5. What is anorexia nervosa, and what are some effective treatments?
6. What is bulimia, and how does it differ from binge eating?

This chapter examines in detail the four major problems of eating—overeating and dieting, anorexia nervosa, bulimia, and binge eating—each related to difficulties in weight maintenance. To put these in context, we first consider the organs and functions of the digestive system.

14-1 The Digestive System

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 14-1** Trace the route of digestion, noting the role of each of the major organs

The human body can digest a wide variety of plant and animal tissues, converting these foods into usable proteins, fats, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals. The digestive system takes in food, processes it into absorbable particles, and excretes the undigested wastes. The particles absorbed through the digestive system are transported through the bloodstream to be available to all body cells. These molecules nourish the body by providing the energy for activity as well as the materials for body growth, maintenance, and repair.

The digestive tract is a modified tube, consisting of multiple specialized structures. Also included are several accessory structures connected to the digestive tract by ducts. These ducted glands produce substances that are essential for digestion, and the ducts provide a way for these substances to enter the digestive system. **Figure 14.1** shows the digestive system.

In humans and other mammals, some digestion begins in the mouth. The teeth tear and grind food, mixing it with saliva. Several **salivary glands** furnish the moisture that allows for the sensation of taste. Without such moisture, the taste buds on the tongue do not function. Saliva also contains an enzyme that digests starch, so some digestion actively begins before food particles leave the mouth.

Swallowing is a voluntary action, but once food is swallowed, its progress through the **pharynx** and **esophagus** is largely involuntary. **Peristalsis**, the rhythmic contraction and relaxation of the circular muscles of structures in the



Check **Your Health Risks** Regarding Eating and Controlling Your Weight

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. I feel comfortable with my present weight. | <input type="checkbox"/> 8. My waist is as big as or bigger than my hips. | <input type="checkbox"/> 14. I would like to have liposuction or gastric bypass surgery to lose weight. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Although I don't eat much, I stay heavier than I would like. | <input type="checkbox"/> 9. I have been on at least 10 different diet programs in my life. | <input type="checkbox"/> 15. I have vomited after eating as a way to control my weight. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. I have lost 15 pounds or more over the past two years. | <input type="checkbox"/> 10. I have fasted, used laxatives, or used diet drugs to lose weight. | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Food is a danger that can be managed by careful thought and mental preparation in order not to eat too much. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. I have gained 15 pounds or more over the past two years. | <input type="checkbox"/> 11. My family has been concerned that I am too thin, but I disagree. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. I am more than 30 pounds overweight. | <input type="checkbox"/> 12. A coach, instructor, or trainer has suggested that weighing less could improve my athletic performance. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. My weight has fluctuated about 5 or 10 pounds during the past two years, but I'm not concerned about it. | <input type="checkbox"/> 13. I sometimes lose control over eating and eat far more than I planned. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. If I were thinner, I would be happier. | | |

Items 1 and 6 reflect a healthy attitude toward weight, but each of the other items represents a health risk from unhealthy eating or attitudes concerning eating. Unhealthy eating not only relates to the development of several diseases but also preoccupation with weight and frequent dieting can be unhealthy.



Real-World Profile of **DANNY CAHILL**



Photo credit Danny Cahill
(www.thedannycahill.com)

Danny Cahill was the biggest loser of the eighth season of the television show *The Biggest Loser*. Danny weighed 430 pounds when he began the competition and ended at 191; he had lost more weight than any other contestant in the program's history (Kolata, 2016). But over the next several years, he gained back 100 pounds, and other contestants also admitted that they had not maintained the lower weight that they attained during their time on the show. Indeed, many of the winners had regained a significant amount of weight a few years after their appearance on the show.

This situation prompted obesity researcher Kevin Hall and his colleagues to study as many of the contestants as they could (Fothergill et al., 2016). Hall enlisted these contestants in a six-year study to track their weight as well as their metabolic rate. Years ago, researchers had established that weight loss is accompanied by a slowing of the metabolic rate, but Hall and his colleagues wanted to determine how much time was necessary for dieters' metabolism to return to normal. The results surprised them: Dieters' metabolic rate remained slow, even after years. That slow metabolic rate is certainly a factor in the weight gain that happened to so many contestants—and to millions of other dieters.

digestive system, propels food through the digestive system, beginning with the esophagus. In the stomach, rhythmic contractions mix the food with **gastric juices** secreted by the stomach and the glands that empty into the stomach. Little absorption of nutrients occurs in the stomach; only alcohol, aspirin, and some fat-soluble drugs are absorbed through the stomach lining. The

major function of the stomach is to mix food particles with gastric juices, preparing the mixture for absorption in the small intestine.

The mixture of food particles and gastric juices moves into the small intestine a little at a time. The high acidity of the gastric juices results in a very acidic mixture, and the small intestine cannot function in high

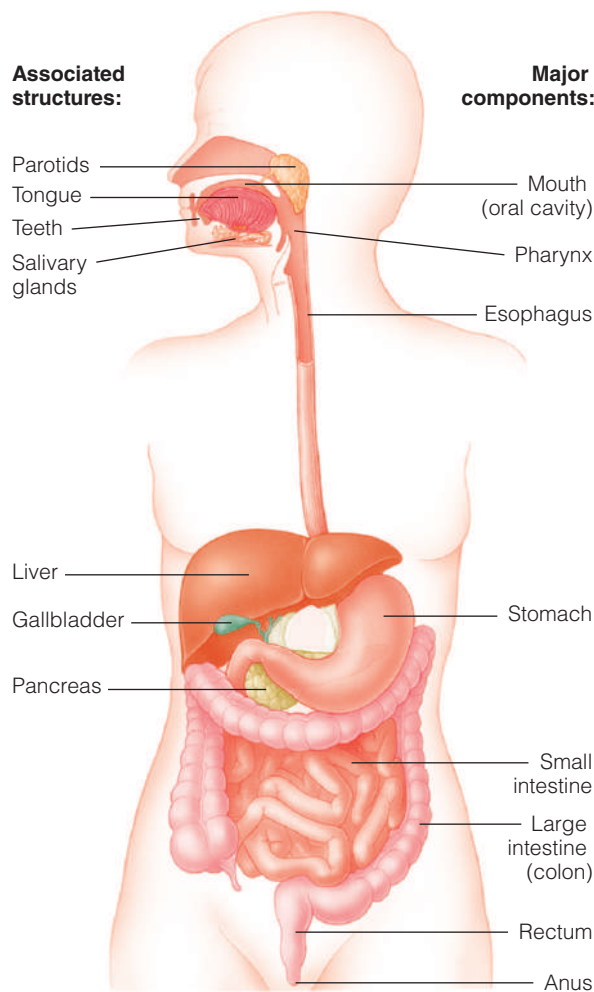


FIGURE 14.1 The digestive system.

Source: *Introduction to microbiology* (p. 556), by J. L. Ingraham & C. A. Ingraham. From INGRAHAM/INGRAHAM, *Introduction to Microbiology*, 1E.

acidity. To reduce the level of acidity, the pancreas secretes several acid-reducing enzymes into the small intestine. These **pancreatic juices** are also essential for digesting carbohydrates and fats.

The digestion of starch that begins in the mouth is completed in the small intestine. The upper third of the small intestine absorbs starch and other carbohydrates. Protein digestion, initiated in the stomach, is also completed when proteins are absorbed in the upper portion of the small intestine. Fats, however, enter the small intestine almost entirely undigested. **Bile salts** produced in the **liver** and stored in the **gall bladder** break down fat molecules into a form that is acted on by a pancreatic

enzyme. Fat absorption occurs in the middle third of the small intestine. The bile salts that aid the process are reabsorbed later in the lower third of the small intestine.

Large quantities of water pass through the small intestine. In addition to the water that people drink, digestive juices increase the fluid volume. Of all the water that passes into the small intestine, 90% is absorbed. This absorption process also causes vitamins and electrolytes to pass into the body at this point in digestion.

From the small intestine, digestion proceeds to the large intestine. As with other portions of the digestive system, movement through the large intestine occurs through peristalsis. However, the peristaltic movement in the large intestine is more sluggish and irregular than in the small intestine. Bacteria inhabit the large intestine and manufacture several vitamins. Although the large intestine has absorptive capabilities, it typically absorbs only water, a few minerals, and the vitamins manufactured by its bacteria.

Feces consist of the materials left behind after digestion. Feces are composed of undigested fiber, inorganic material, undigested nutrients, water, and bacteria. Peristalsis carries the feces through the large intestine, through the **rectum**, and finally through the **anus**, where they are eliminated.

In summary, the digestive system turns food into nutrients by a process that begins in the mouth with the breakdown of food into smaller particles. Digestive juices continue to act on food particles in the stomach, but digestion of most types of nutrients occurs in the small intestine. Digestion is completed with the elimination of the undigested residue. The digestive system is plagued by more diseases and disorders than any other body system. Many digestive disorders are not of active concern to health psychology, but several, such as obesity, anorexia nervosa, bulimia, and binge eating, have important behavioral components. In addition, maintaining a stable weight depends on behaviors—eating and activity.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Analyze what would be the likely change in eating behavior if the output for each of the following digestive structures decreased by 50%: salivary glands, gastric juices, pancreatic juices, and gall bladder.

14-2 Factors in Weight Maintenance

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 14-2** Explain the weight maintenance equation, including the role of leptin, ghrelin, and cholecystokinin

Stable weight occurs when the calories absorbed from food equal those expended for body metabolism plus physical activity. This balance is not a simple calculation but, rather, the result of a complex set of actions and interactions. Caloric content varies with foods; fat has more calories per volume than carbohydrates or proteins. The degree of absorption depends on how rapidly food passes through the digestive system and even the nutrient composition of the foods. Furthermore, metabolic rates can differ from person to person and from time to time, as Danny Cahill's has done. Activity level is another source of variability, with greater activity requiring greater caloric expenditures to maintain a stable weight.

To obtain calories, people (and other animals) must eat. Eating and weight balance have regulating components in the nervous system. A variety of hormones and neurotransmitters form short-term and long-term regulation systems (Blundell et al., 2015). White adipose tissue (fat) produces **leptin**, a protein hormone discovered in 1994. Leptin acts on receptors in the central nervous system as part of a signaling system involved in the long-term regulation of weight. Low leptin levels signal low fat stores, prompting eating. High levels signal adequate fat stores and satiation. **Insulin** is a second hormone involved in weight maintenance. Produced by the pancreas, this hormone allows body cells to take in glucose for their use. (Deficiency in insulin production or use results in diabetes, which is covered in Chapter 11.) High insulin production leads to the intake of more glucose than cells can use, and the excess is converted into fat in the body. In the brain, insulin acts on the **hypothalamus**, sending signals of satiation and decreasing appetite.

The hormone **ghrelin**, a peptide hormone discovered in 1999, also plays a role in eating (Blundell et al., 2015). This hormone is produced by cells in the stomach wall, and its level rises before and falls after meals. Thus, ghrelin seems to be involved in the short-term

regulation of food intake by prompting eating. Ghrelin also acts in the hypothalamus to activate *neuropeptide Y*, which secretes *Agouti-related peptide*. This peptide stimulates appetite and decreases metabolism, thus affecting the weight balance equation in two ways.

In addition to the hormones that prompt eating, a variety of hormones is related to feelings of satiation and thus tends to decrease or terminate eating. The hormone **cholecystokinin (CCK)**, a peptide hormone produced by the intestines, acts on the brain to produce feelings of satiation. CCK, *glucagon-like peptide 1*, and *peptide YY* are all produced in the intestines but act on the hypothalamus to signal satiation (Blundell et al., 2015). Thus, the picture of hormone and neurotransmitter action in relation to hunger and eating is very complex and not yet fully understood. One system appears to initiate eating, and one seems to produce satiation and thus decrease eating. **Table 14.1** lists each set of hormones and shows where they are produced. Notice that many are produced in the hypothalamus and all may act on different nuclei in the hypothalamus to form a complex mechanism for the short-term and long-term regulation of weight.

To understand the complexities of weight metabolism and weight maintenance, consider an extreme example: an experiment in which participants were systematically starved.

Experimental Starvation

More than 70 years ago, Ancel Keys and his colleagues (Keys et al., 1950) began a study on the physical effects of human starvation. The research took place during World War II; the participants were conscientious objectors who volunteered to be part of the study as an alternative to military service. In most ways these volunteers were quite normal young men; their weights were normal, their IQs were in the normal to high range, and they were emotionally stable.

For the first three months of the project, the 36 volunteers ate regularly to establish their normal caloric requirements. Next, the men received half their previous rations, with the goal of reducing their body weight to 75% of previous levels. Although the researchers cut the participants' caloric intake in half, they were careful to give them adequate nutrients so that the men were never in any danger of actually starving. However, the men were hungry almost constantly.

At first the men lost weight rapidly, but the initial pace of weight loss did not last. To continue losing weight,

TABLE 14.1 Hormones Involved in Appetite and Satiation

Hormones That Increase Appetite		Hormones That Increase Satiation	
Hormone	Produced In	Hormone	Produced In
Ghrelin	Stomach	Leptin	Adipose tissue
Neuropeptide Y	Hypothalamus	Insulin	Pancreas
Orexins	Hypothalamus	Cholecystokinin	Intestines
Agouti-related peptide	Hypothalamus	Glucagon-like peptide 1	Intestines
Melanin-concentrating hormone (MCH)	Hypothalamus	Peptide YY	Intestines

the men had to consume even fewer calories, which led to considerable suffering. Nevertheless, most stayed with the project through the entire six months, and most met their goal of losing 25% of their body weight.

The behaviors that accompanied the semistarvation were quite surprising to Keys and his colleagues. The men were optimistic and cheerful initially, but these feelings soon vanished. The men became irritable, aggressive, and began to fight among themselves—behavior that was completely out of character. Although the men continued this bellicose behavior throughout the six months of the starvation phase, they also became apathetic and avoided physical activity as much as they could. They became neglectful of their dormitory, their own physical appearance, and their girlfriends.

The men became increasingly obsessed with thoughts of food. Mealtimes became the center of their lives; they tended to eat very slowly and to be very sensitive to the taste of their food. At the beginning of the period of caloric reduction, the researchers saw no need to place physical restrictions on the men to prevent them from cheating on their diets. But about three months into the starvation, the men said that they should not leave the dormitory alone because they feared they would cheat. As a result, they were allowed to go out only in pairs or in larger groups. These dedicated, polite, normal, stable young men had become abnormal and unpleasant under conditions of semistarvation.

Obsession with food and a continuing negative outlook also characterized the refeeding phase of the project. The refeeding plan was for the men to regain the weight they had lost over a three-month period. This phase was to have lasted three months, with food introduced at gradually increasing levels. The men objected so strongly that the pace of refeeding was accelerated. As a result, the men ate as much and as often as they could, some as many as five large meals a

day. By the end of the refeeding period, most men had regained their pre-experimental weight; indeed, many were slightly heavier. About half were still preoccupied with food; for many, their prestarvation optimism and cheerfulness had not completely returned.

Experimental Overeating

The counterpart to experimental starvation is experimental overeating, which seems like a much more attractive option. Ethan Allen Sims and his associates



Experimental starvation produced an obsession with food and a variety of negative changes in the behavior of these volunteers.

Wallace Kirkland/Time life pictures/Getty Images

(Sims, 1974, 1976; Sims et al., 1973; Sims & Horton, 1968) found a group of people who should have been especially interested and appreciative—prisoners. Inmates at the Vermont State Prison volunteered to gain 20 to 30 pounds as part of an experiment on overeating. Sims' interest was analogous to Keys's—an understanding of the physical and psychological components of overeating. These prisoners had special living arrangements, including plentiful and delicious food. In addition, the experiment included a restriction of physical activity to make weight gain easier.

Increased calories and decreased physical activity would seem to assure weight gain. Did these men gain weight? At first, they gained fairly easily. But soon the rate of weight gain slowed, and the participants had to eat more and more to continue gaining. As with the men in the starvation study, these men needed about 3,500 calories to maintain their weight at normal levels, but many had to double that amount to continue gaining. Not all the men were able to attain their weight goals, regardless of how much they ate. One man did not reach his goal even though he ate more than 10,000 calories per day.

Were the overeating prisoners as miserable as the starving conscientious objectors? No, but they came to find overeating unpleasant. Food became repulsive to them, despite the excellent quality and preparation. They had to force themselves to eat, and many considered dropping out of the study.

When the weight gain phase of the study was over, the prisoners cut down their food intake dramatically and lost weight. Not all lost as quickly as others, and two had some trouble returning to their original weight. An examination of these two men's medical backgrounds revealed some family history of obesity, although the men themselves had never been overweight. These results indicate that some people have trouble increasing their weight substantially and that, even if they do, the increased weight is difficult to maintain. This finding does not seem consistent with the incidence of overweight and obesity.

IN SUMMARY

Weight maintenance depends largely on two factors: the number of calories absorbed through food intake and the number expended through body metabolism and physical activity. Underlying this balance is a complex set of hormones and neurotransmitters that have selective effects on various

brain sites, including the hypothalamus. Weight gain occurs when individuals ingest more nutrients than are required for maintenance of body metabolism and physical activity. Weight loss occurs when insufficient nutrients are present to furnish the necessary energy for body metabolism and activity. An experiment in starvation showed that loss of too much weight leads to irritability, aggression, apathy, lack of interest in sex, and preoccupation with food. Another experiment in overeating showed that some people find gaining weight almost as difficult as losing it.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Considering the body metabolism and physical activity components of the weight maintenance equation, describe how you could attain a balanced equation and two ways that you could unbalance the equation.
2. Write a brief reflection about which you would choose if you had to participate in an experiment on eating: a study like Keys's experimental starvation or one like Sims's experimental overeating.

14-3 Overeating and Obesity

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 14-3** Analyze how ethnicity and location in the world influence the prevalence of obesity
- 14-4** Explain how the food environment is a stronger factor in obesity than genetic factors
- 14-5** Defend either the set-point model or the positive incentive model of weight. In your argument, be sure to include evidence from the experiments on experimental starvation and experimental overeating
- 14-6** Analyze the relationship between weight and poor health, including both obesity and extreme thinness

Overeating is not the sole cause of obesity, but it is an important part of the weight maintenance equation. As the studies on experimental starvation and overeating show, metabolic-level changes with food intake as well as with energy output alter the efficiency of nutrient use by the body. Thus, individual variations in body metabolism allow some people to burn calories faster than others. Two people who eat the same amount may have different weights, as the study found with the metabolic rates of Danny Cahill and other “winners” from the reality show *The Biggest Loser* (Fothergill et al., 2016).

Although many overweight people report that they eat less than others, these self-reports tend to be inaccurate; objective measurements usually indicate that overweight people eat more (Jeffery & Harnack, 2007; Pietiläinen et al., 2010). They are especially likely to eat food rich in fat, which has a higher caloric density than carbohydrates or protein. That is, they may eat less food but more calories. Overweight individuals also tend to be less physically active than leaner people, which contributes to overweight. Both behaviors contribute to obesity and its related health consequences, but the underlying reasons for obesity and even its definition remain controversial.

What is Obesity?

Answers to the question of what obesity is vary by personal and social standards. Should obesity be defined

in terms of health? Appearance? Body mass? Percentage of body fat? Weight charts? Total weight? No good definition of obesity would consider only body weight, because some individuals have a small skeletal frame, whereas others are larger, and some people’s weight is in muscle, whereas others carry weight in fat. Muscle tissue and bone weigh more than fat, so some people can be heavier yet leaner, as athletes often are.

Determining percentage and distribution of body fat is not easy, and several different assessment methods exist (Borga et al., 2018). Many new technologies for imaging the body—ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging, and X-ray absorptiometry—can be applied to assessing fat content, but these methods have the drawbacks of being expensive and relatively inaccessible. Simpler methods include the skinfold technique, which involves measuring the thickness of a pinch of skin, and bioelectrical impedance measurement, which involves sending a harmless level of electrical current through the body to measure levels of fat in various parts of the body. Neither of these approaches is as accurate as the more expensive measurements.

The most common assessment is even easier: consulting a chart. Height–weight charts were popular, but the **body mass index (BMI)** is now the most popular approach. BMI is defined as body weight in kilograms (kg) divided by height in meters squared (m^2)—that is, $BMI = kg/m^2$. Although BMI does not consider a



The weight maintenance equation is complex, but overeating is a cause of obesity.

person’s age, gender, or body build, this measurement began to gain popularity in the early 1990s. Neither weight charts nor BMI measures body fat, but this index can provide a standard for measuring overweight and obesity (National Task Force on the Prevention and Treatment of Obesity, 2000). Overweight is usually defined as a BMI of 25 through 29.9 and obesity as a BMI of 30 or more. (A 5’10” man with a BMI of 30 would weigh 207 pounds, and a 5’4” woman with a BMI of 30 would weigh 174.) **Table 14.2** shows a sample of BMI levels and their corresponding heights and weights.

Another measure that can be useful in assessing overweight is fat distribution, measured as the ratio of waist to hip size. People who have waists that approach the size of their hips tend to have fat distributed around their middles, whereas people who have large hips compared with their waists have lower hip-to-waist ratios.

Regardless of the definitions that researchers have used to study obesity, overweight is often defined in terms of social standards and fashion. These definitions usually have little to do with health and are subject to variations by culture and time. Numerous examples come from human history. During times when food supply was uncertain (the most frequent situation throughout history), carrying some supply of fat on the body was a type of insurance and thus often considered attractive (Nelson & Morrison, 2005). Fat could also be considered a mark of prosperity; fat advertised to the world that a person could afford an ample supply of food. Only in very recent history has this standard changed. Before 1920, thinness was considered unattractive, possibly due to its association with diseases or poverty.

Thinness is no longer considered unattractive. Indeed, today it is as highly desirable as plumpness was in

TABLE 14.2 Body Mass Index Scores and Their Corresponding Heights and Weights

Body Mass Index (kg/m ²)								
	17 ^a	21	23	25	27	30	35	40 ^b
Height in Inches	Weight in Pounds							
60	88	107	118	128	138	153	179	204
61	90	111	122	132	143	158	185	211
62	93	115	126	136	147	164	191	218
63	96	118	130	141	152	169	197	225
64	99	122	134	145	157	174	202	232
65	102	126	138	150	162	180	210	240
66	106	130	142	155	167	186	216	247
67	109	134	146	159	172	191	223	255
68	112	138	151	164	177	197	230	262
69	115	142	155	169	182	203	236	270
70	119	146	160	174	188	207	243	278
71	122	150	165	179	193	215	250	286
72	125	154	169	184	199	221	258	294
73	129	159	174	189	204	227	265	302
74	132	163	179	194	210	233	272	311
75	136	168	184	200	216	240	279	319
76	140	172	189	205	221	246	287	328

^aBMI of 17 after intentional starvation meets one World Health Organization definition of anorexia nervosa.

^bBMI of 40 is considered morbid obesity by Bender, Trautner, Spraul, & Berger (1998).

previous centuries, especially for women. Early studies that examined changes in the body weight of *Playboy* centerfolds and Miss America candidates from 1959 to 1978 (Garner et al., 1980), from 1979 to 1988 (Wiseman et al., 1992), and another from 1922 to 1999 (Rubenstein & Caballero, 2000) found that weights for both groups had decreased relative to average weight of the general population. Later analyses of centerfolds (Seifert, 2005; Sypeck et al., 2006) confirmed this trend toward thinness over the past 100 years. These ideal bodies are so thin that 99% of centerfolds and 100% of Miss America winners fall into the underweight range (Spitzer et al., 1999).

This thin ideal for women's bodies has become so widely accepted that even normal weight women (Maynard et al., 2006) and adolescent girls (Aloufi et al., 2017) often consider themselves too heavy. The acceptance of thinness as attractive for women begins as early as age 3 (Harriger et al., 2010), is established by age 5 (Damiano et al., 2015), and persists into adulthood (Brown & Slaughter, 2011). Clearly, obesity, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder, and the ideal body has become thinner over the past 100 years.

Despite the emphasis on thinness, obesity has become epidemic. In the United States, adult obesity increased by 50% from the early 1980s to the late 1990s and has continued to increase (NCHS, 2019). A similar increase occurred worldwide during the same time frame (WHO, 2020). In the United States, extreme obesity more than doubled during the 1990s and continued to grow among women through 2014 (NCHS, 2019). Nor is the increase in obesity confined to adults or even to humans; other animals such as dogs, cats, and rats that live near humans have also become fatter over the past several decades (Klimentidis, 2011). There are now more people in the world who are obese than underweight (WHO, 2020). As Barry Popkin (2009) concluded, "The world is fat."

If obesity is defined as having a BMI of 30 or higher, then 39.6% of U.S. adults are obese, and an additional 31.6% are overweight, defined as a BMI of 25.0 to 29.9 (Fryar et al., 2018). The rates of obesity are lower in young children (9.4%), higher in older children (17.4%), and even higher among adolescents (20.6%). However, these rates increased from those in the 1980s (Ogden et al., 2016). Obesity and overweight occurs in both genders, all ethnic groups, all geographic regions, and all educational levels. As **Figure 14.2** shows, however, the rates of obesity and overweight vary by gender and ethnic background.

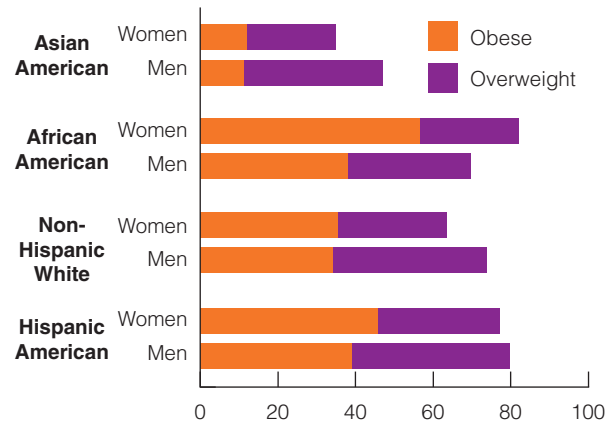


FIGURE 14.2 Percentage of U. S. women and men who are overweight and obese, by ethnic group.

Source: Data from Health, United States, 2017. National Center for Health Statistics, Table 26.

Overweight and obesity rates in the United States rank among the highest in the world (Chooi et al., 2019), but in many other countries, the rate of overweight is also over 50%. For example, all of the countries in the Americas have a rate this high, and so do all of the countries in Europe. Indeed, many countries have a rate of over 60%. However, Southeast Asian countries have the lowest obesity rate in the world. Of course, obesity rates are lower than rates of overweight, but countries with high rates of overweight also have high obesity rates.

Why are Some People Obese?

Researchers have proposed several reasons for the dramatic increase in obesity over the past two decades, including an increase in consumption of fast food and sweetened sodas, growing portion sizes, and a decrease in physical activity. These factors apply not only to people in the United States (Pereira et al., 2005) but also those in many other countries, including low-income countries (Popkin, 2009). A lifestyle of fast food and television viewing is related to a larger body mass index and to weight gain. Indeed, adolescents whose schools are located within half a mile of a fast-food restaurant are more likely to be overweight compared with those without a fast-food restaurant so close to their school (Davis & Carpenter, 2009).

The consumption of sugar-sweetened sodas is another behavior that studies have related to increased incidence of overweight (Bermudez & Gao, 2011; Bray,

2004; Must et al., 2009). Large portion size also contributes to increasing obesity, and despite pleas by health authorities, fast-food restaurants continue to “supersize” meals (Young & Nestle, 2007), which tends to supersize diners. This trend affects high-income countries more than middle- or low-income countries, but obesity is a growing epidemic around the world (WHO, 2020).

However, in all countries, some people are obese, whereas others stay thin. To account for this variation, researchers have examined a complex set of biological and environmental factors, yielding several models. These models, which should be capable of explaining both the development and the maintenance of obesity, include the set-point model, genetic explanations, and the positive incentive model.

The Set-Point Model The set-point model holds that weight is regulated around a **set-point**, a type of internal thermostat. When fat levels rise above or fall below a certain level, physiological and psychological mechanisms are activated that encourage a return to set-point. The discovery of leptin and the other hormones related to weight regulation is consistent with this view. Body fat produces leptin, which acts as a signaling system to the hypothalamus in the brain. The findings from the study on experimental starvation, the studies on experimental overeating, and the contestants on *The Biggest Loser* who regained weight are also consistent with the concept of a set-point, which predicts that deviations from normal weight in either direction are achieved only with difficulty, and dieters encounter additional difficulty in maintaining a different body weight. When fat levels fall below set-point, the body takes action to preserve its fat stores. Part of that action includes slowing the metabolic process to require fewer calories, which Fothergill et al. (2016) found in tracking the metabolic changes in *The Biggest Loser* contestants. People on diets have difficulty in continuing to lose weight because their bodies fight against the depletion of fat stores. With conditions of prolonged and serious starvation, this slowed metabolism is expressed behaviorally as listlessness and apathy—both of which appeared in Keys’s starving volunteers.

Increased hunger is the body’s other corrective action when fat supplies fall below set-point. Again, this mechanism seems to be consistent with the action of leptin, the results of the Keys et al. study on starvation, and Danny Cahill and other contestants. When fat stores fall, leptin levels decrease, which activates the hypothalamus in ways that result in hunger (Blundell

et al., 2015). In Keys’ study, the men became miserable as they dieted, and they stayed that way until they went back to their original weight. During the time they were below their normal weight (which would be below set-point), they were obsessed with food. When they could eat, they preferred the high-calorie foods that tended to increase their fat stores most rapidly, a situation that is consistent with set-point theory. They acted as though they were receiving messages from their bodies to eat. *The Biggest Loser* contestants tried to ignore these messages; some failed, but some succeeded in keeping the weight off, which is not consistent with set-point theory.

The experiment on overeating also fits with set-point theory. The prisoners who tried to gain more than their normal weight were fighting their natural set-point, possibly through the leptin signaling system, which should have translated into something like “Stop eating.” The prisoners’ bodies heard the signal—they would have preferred to eat less.

Questions remain concerning the set-point model, including why the set-point should vary so much from person to person and why some people have a set-point that is set at obese. One answer may be that the set-point is at least partly established through a hereditary component.

Genetic Explanations of Obesity One genetic explanation of obesity looks to human prehistory to explain why people tend to put on weight, hypothesizing that humans (and other animals) have evolved a “thrifty” metabolism that tends to store fat (Cummings & Schwartz, 2003). As Jonathan Engel put it: “We evolved to be fat.” (2018, p. 11). This tendency would be adaptive if food supplies were scarce, as they were throughout most of history and prehistory. With the plentiful supply of food available to most people in high- and middle-income countries, this thrifty metabolism pushes people toward overweight and obesity. Indeed, some speculation holds that this availability makes obesity almost inevitable (Walker et al., 2003). However, not all people are obese, and within any environment, some individuals are fatter than others. Some of that variation must be attributable to factors other than a general tendency to store fat.

Obesity tends to run in families, which suggests the possibility of a specific genetic basis. However, eating patterns are also shared in families, so researchers have studied twins and adopted children to disentangle genetic and environmental influences in weight. Results from early studies on adopted children (Stunkard

et al., 1986) and identical twins reared together or apart (Stunkard et al., 1990) suggested a role for heredity in weight. Adopted children's weights were more similar to their biological parents' than to their adoptive parents', and the weights of twins were highly correlated, even when the twins had not been raised together. Heritability also affects BMI (Schousboe et al., 2004) and fat distribution on the body (Fox et al., 2004).

These studies suggest that weight and fat distribution have strong genetic components. Some gene mutations produce metabolic malfunctions that cause obesity (Rohde et al., 2019, but these mutations account for only about 5% of the variation in body mass.

No authorities claim that any single gene determines most human obesity (Cummings & Schwartz, 2003; Rohde et al., 2019). Indeed, even researchers who claim a strong genetic influence for weight are focusing on the interaction among many genes, epigenetic processes, and the influence of various environmental circumstances to understand weight regulation and obesity (Rohde et al., 2019; Rooney & Ozanne, 2011;

Wells, 2011). Some combinations of genes may function in faulty ways that disregulate the set-point system and produce obesity. Another possibility emphasizes maternal overnutrition during late pregnancy and nursing, which may activate genes that produce permanent changes in metabolism. Another possibility includes identifying many gene combinations that respond to the food environment (such as availability of high-fat or sweetened food) and create obesity. Yet another approach is an examination of how environment affects epigenetic processes that alter the function of genes (Rhode et al., 2019).

This emphasis on the food environment is well founded—obesity occurs in a specific context; a person cannot be obese without an adequate food supply, regardless of genetics. Although the genetic components of obesity may explain some of the variation in weight among people in a given environment, the increase in obesity that is occurring around the world has developed too rapidly to be the result of genes. Researchers must look beyond inheritance to attain a complete

Would You BELIEVE...?

You May Need to Nap Rather Than to Diet

Would you believe that sleep deprivation is related to obesity? It's not that being awake longer creates more opportunities for eating (which may be true) or that nighttime snacking may lead to obesity (which it may; Coles et al., 2007). Rather, sleep may be related to weight regulation, and missing sleep may produce problems in this system.

A suggestion of the importance of sleep for weight regulation came from the observation that sleep deprivation has become increasingly common for large numbers of people, which has coincided with increasing obesity. Researchers began to wonder: Is this relationship a coincidence or is there some underlying connection?

First, researchers attended to the basic question: Does inadequate sleep correlate with overweight? An

examination of the sleep habits of a representative sample of the U.S. population (Wheaton et al., 2011) led to the conclusion that individuals who get less than seven hours of sleep per night are more likely to be overweight or obese than people who sleep more. This relationship also occurs in obese children (Seegers et al., 2011). A large body of research confirms the relationship between sleep deprivation and overweight (Ogilvie & Patel, 2017). Research has also established that short sleep duration precedes weight gain (Lyytikäinen et al., 2011), which is a necessary link in establishing any causal relationship.

Next, researchers attempted to connect lack of sleep with physical mechanisms that might cause this relationship. One candidate is hormonal action that might underlie

the relationship between sleep deprivation and obesity. Reviews of that research (Knutson & van Cauter, 2008; Leger et al., 2015) support the conclusion that the type of partial sleep deprivation that has become so common is also capable of altering the regulation of the hormones involved in appetite and eating in ways that may cause weight gain and insulin resistance. Specifically, sleep deprivation increases ghrelin, which stimulates eating, and decreases leptin, which acts as a satiation signal (Knutson & van Cauter, 2008). Individuals who sleep less than six hours a night are at elevated risk of overweight and obesity (Leger et al., 2015). Thus, getting adequate sleep may be more beneficial than keeping you well rested—sleeping may protect against obesity.

explanation of obesity. (See the Would You Believe . . . ? box for another suggestion of an environmental influence on the development of obesity.)

The Positive Incentive Model The shortcomings of set-point theory and genetics in explaining all factors related to eating and obesity led to the formulation of the *positive incentive model*. This model holds that the positive reinforcement of eating has important consequences for weight maintenance. This view suggests that people have several types of motivation to eat, including personal pleasure and social context as well as food deprivation and hormone production (Pinel et al., 2000). The personal pleasure factors revolve around the pleasures from the type and taste of food. The social context of eating includes the cultural background of the person eating as well as the surroundings, the presence of others, and whether they are eating. Biological factors include the length of time since eating and blood glucose and ghrelin levels. In addition, some proponents of the positive incentive theory (Pinel et al., 2000) take an evolutionary view, contending that humans have an evolved tendency to eat in the presence of food. Scarcity of food has built animals that survived when they laid on fat, making eating and the selection of food an important evolved ability. Therefore, this model includes biological factors but holds that eating is a process involving self-regulation, with important individual, learned, and cultural components (Epstein et al., 2007; Finlayson et al., 2007).

The set-point model ignores the factors of taste, learning, and social context in eating, and these factors are unquestionably important (Bessesen, 2011; Rozin, 2005; Stroebe et al., 2008). For each person in each instance, the act of choosing something to eat has a long history of personal experience and cultural learning. But a preferred food will not be equally appealing under all circumstances. For example, some foods—such as pickles and ice cream—do not seem to go together (at least for most people), even if both foods are individually tasty.

Social setting is important to eating, which is often a social activity. People tend to eat more in the presence of others, unless they believe that the others are judging them, and then they eat less (Vartanian et al., 2007), suggesting that social norms govern eating situations (Herman & Polivy, 2005). Culture provides an even wider context for eating, and various cultures have restrictions (and requirements) on what, when, and how much to eat. People tend to get hungry on a schedule

that corresponds to mealtimes, but people in the United States are much more likely to eat cereal for breakfast than for dinner. In contrast, people in Spain lack a cultural tradition for this type of food, which made marketing cereal difficult in that country (Visser, 1999). These cultural and learned factors also affect the caloric value of chosen foods and how much a person eats, and these choices influence body weight. For example, when people choose “comfort foods,” they often choose either food that carries personal nostalgic emotions or food that represents a personal indulgence (Locher et al., 2005).

The positive incentive view predicts a variety of body weights, depending on food availability, individual experience with food, cultural encouragement to eat various foods, and the cultural ideal for body weight. Thus, this view hypothesizes that the availability of an abundant food supply is necessary but not sufficient to produce obesity. People must overeat to become obese, and the quantity of food a person eats is related to how palatable the food is. Some tastes, such as sweet, are innately determined through the action of taste buds, and an overabundance of sweet food may be a factor in the dysregulation of body weight (Swithers et al., 2010).

In high-income countries, a huge food industry promotes food products as desirable through massive advertising campaigns, and many of these foods are high in sugar and fat. This situation influences individual food choices that promote population-wide obesity (Brownell & Horgen, 2004). Indeed, even rats eat more when food cues are abundant in the environment (Polivy et al., 2007).

Another factor that promotes overeating is the availability of a variety of foods. Eating a very desirable food leads to a decreased evaluation of how pleasant that food is (Brondel et al., 2009); that is, people become satiated for any food. When food supplies are limited in variety (but not in quantity), this factor can lead to lower levels of food consumption, but a body of research indicates that variety boosts food intake (Raynor & Vadvilovs, 2018). A new taste can tempt someone who is full to eat more. Indeed, if eating enough terminated a meal, then dessert would not be so popular (Pinel, 2014).

Variety is important in boosting eating, even in rats. A large body of research (Ackroff et al., 2007; Raynor & Epstein, 2001; Sclafani, 2001) indicates that variety is important in the amount eaten, for rats and for humans. An early study (Sclafani & Springer, 1976) showed that a “supermarket” diet produced weight



Photograph: eu/Shutterstock.com

Eating is often a social activity, and social factors may contribute to overeating.

gains of 269% in laboratory rats. The diet consisted of a changing variety of foods chosen from the supermarket, including chocolate-chip cookies, salami, cheese, bananas, marshmallows, chocolate, peanut butter, and sweetened condensed milk. The combination of high fat and high sugar plus the changing variety led to enormous weight gain.

Are humans very different? The availability of a wide variety of tasty food should produce widespread obesity, which is exactly the situation that exists in a number of countries today. This wide variety of foods allows people to always have some foods that furnish a new taste, and people in such situations never become satiated for all available foods.

However, fat may be more important than other ingredients in producing obesity. Not only is fat denser in calories, but some evidence indicates that fat intake is also capable of affecting the biology of weight regulation. One hypothesis (Niswender et al., 2011) holds that ingestion of fat- and sugar-heavy foods disrupts satiation signals and boosts appetite signals in the brain. Thus, eating a diet high in fat and sugar increases appetite rather than leading to satiation. The results from a twin study (Rissanen et al., 2002) support this contention. To control for genetics, this study examined twin pairs in which one twin was obese and the other was normal weight. This procedure assured that the weight difference was due to environmental rather than genetic factors. The analysis indicated that the obese twins not only ate a diet higher in fat than their leaner twins but also reported memories of preferences for such foods from adolescence and young adulthood.

Thus, the positive incentive theory of eating and weight maintenance considers factors that the set-point model ignores, including individual food preferences, cultural influences on eating, cultural influences on body composition, and the relationship between food availability and obesity. Both models draw on biological factors and inheritance, and many advocates of the set-point theory acknowledge that the factors highlighted by the positive incentive theory are important to weight regulation and contribute to obesity.

How Unhealthy is Obesity?

Overweight and obesity are undesirable from a fashion point of view, but how much does overweight endanger health? These effects depend partly on the degree of overweight and the distribution of fat on the body. Being slightly overweight is not much of a health risk (McGee, 2005), but increasing overweight increases risks. Obesity places a person at an elevated risk for health problems and premature death.

The relationship between weight and poor health is *u*-shaped; that is, the very thinnest and the very heaviest people seem to be at greatest risk for all-cause mortality in Europe (Pischon et al., 2008) and in the United States (Flegal et al., 2013). Low body weight is not as much of a risk as obesity, and some researchers (Fontana & Hu, 2014) have argued that low body weight can be healthier than normal weight; these researchers point out that observational studies that show a risk for low body weight are confounded by the inclusion of thin people who were thin because they were sick. The risk for

TABLE 14.3 Categories of Obesity and Risks for All-Cause Mortality Based on Body Mass Index (BMI)

Degree of Obesity	BMI Range	Risk for Men	Relative Risk	Risk for Women	Relative Risk
Moderate	25 to 32	None	1.0	Slightly elevated	1.1
Obese	32 to 36	Low	1.3	Low	1.2
Gross	36 to 40	High	1.9	Low	1.3
Morbid	40>	Very high	3.1	Very high	2.3

Source: Based on Bender et al. (1998).

people who are overweight but not obese is also controversial (Fontana & Hu, 2014), but without any question, obesity is a mortality risk. A summary of these levels of risk appears in [Table 14.3](#).

Other studies show similar results: Obesity is associated not only with increased mortality but also with increased use of medical care (Bertakis & Azari, 2005). In the United States, the increased medical costs were about \$2,000 per obese person per year (Kim & Basu, 2016). Obese people also have increased chances for developing a long list of disorders, including Type 2 diabetes (Lotta et al., 2015), osteoarthritis (Reyes et al., 2016), stroke and hypertension (Fontana & Hu, 2014), heart attack (Zhu et al., 2014), a variety of cancers (Brenner, 2014), gallbladder disease (Smelt, 2010), migraine headache (Peterlin et al., 2010); kidney stones (Taylor et al., 2005); and sleep apnea, respiratory problems, liver disease, osteoarthritis, reproductive problems in women, and colon cancer (National Task Force on the Prevention and Treatment of Obesity, 2000). A large-scale study in Europe found that mortality risk was lowest for women with a BMI of 24.3 and for men with a BMI of 25.3 (Pischoon et al., 2008).

Both age and ethnicity complicate the interpretation of risk from obesity. For young and middle-aged adults, being obese is a risk for all-cause mortality and especially for death due to cardiovascular disease (McGee, 2005). Indeed, being overweight during childhood and adolescence predicts increased morbidity (Llewellyn et al., 2016) and mortality (Björge et al., 2008) during adulthood. For older adults, being slightly overweight poses less risk than being thin (Winter et al., 2014).

Another weight-related factor associated with morbidity and mortality is weight distribution. People who accumulate excess weight around their abdomen are at greater risk than people who carry their excess weight on their hips and thighs; men are more likely to have abdominal fat, whereas women are more likely to have excess fat on hips and thighs (Frank et al., 2019).

These patterns produce different body shapes that are reflected in the ratio of waist-to-hip measurement, which may be better predictors of all-cause mortality than the body mass index (Fontana & Hu, 2014; Pischoon et al., 2008).

The dangers of “beer bellies” were noted more than 30 years ago (Hartz et al., 1984), but more recently this pattern of fat distribution has been integrated into a pattern of risk factors called the *metabolic syndrome*, a collection of factors proposed to elevate the risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes. In addition to excess abdominal fat, components of the metabolic syndrome include elevated blood pressure, insulin resistance, and problems with the levels of two components of cholesterol. A large waistline is the most visible symptom of this syndrome, and research has indicated that abdominal fat is positively related to the metabolic syndrome, but fat on the thighs has a negative relationship (Frank et al., 2019; Goodpaster et al., 2005).

In conclusion, obese people have heightened risks of developing certain health problems, especially diabetes, gallstones, and cardiovascular disease. [Table 14.4](#) summarizes studies showing that obesity and fat distributed around the waist both relate to increased mortality rates, especially from heart disease.

IN SUMMARY

Obesity can be defined in terms of health or social standards, and the two are not always the same. Assessment of body fat requires complex technology for accurate measurement, so the body mass index is often the assessment for overweight and obesity. Social standards, however, have dictated a standard of thinness with a lower body weight than is ideal for health.

Several models seek to explain obesity, including the set-point model, genetic factors, and the positive incentive model. Set-point theory explains weight regulation in terms of biological control

systems that are sensitive to body fat. This model hypothesizes that obesity is a defect in this control mechanism. Such a defect is the primary component of genetic models of obesity, which hypothesize that obesity occurs through gene mutations and epigenetic processes that affect the neurochemicals that signal hunger or satiation. However, both of these models acknowledge but neither emphasizes learned and environmental factors of eating into account; the positive incentive model does. This view holds that people (and other animals) gain weight when they have ready access to an abundant and varied supply of tasty food.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Interview someone who has personal experience of overweight, explain the set-point and positive incentive models, and ask the person which of those models would fit best with the person's experience.
2. Four factors contribute to the obesity epidemic in many countries: consumption of fast food, consumption of sugar-sweetened sodas, increasing portion size, and decreased physical activity. Analyze how this information applies to your diet and behavior.

TABLE 14.4 The Relationship Between Weight and Disease or Death

Results	Sample	Authors
Effects of Obesity		
Obesity is a risk for all-cause mortality.	U.S. population	Flegal et al., 2013
Obesity and underweight are risks for all-cause mortality.	Adults from nine countries in Europe	Pischon et al., 2008
Obese adults sought health care more often than normal-weight adults.	Obese and normal-weight adults	Bertakis & Azari, 2005 Kim & Basu, 2016
Obesity is a risk for Type 2 diabetes	Systematic review	Lotta et al., 2016
Headaches are more common among obese, especially those with abdominal obesity.	Large sample of U.S. adults	Peterlin et al., 2010
Obesity is a risk for kidney stones.	Men, older women, younger women	Taylor et al., 2005
Obesity increases risk for all-cause mortality.	Young and middle-aged adults	Flegal et al., 2013; McGee, 2005
Overweight and obesity increase risk for heart attack.	Meta-analysis of five studies	Zhu et al., 2014
Overweight was slightly protective of mortality for older adults.	U.S. adults	Winter et al., 2014
Overweight during childhood and adolescence raises the risk for later mortality.	Overweight children and adolescents; systematic review	Bjørge et al., 2008; Llewellyn et al., 2016
Effects of Abdominal Fat		
Abdominal fat is strongly associated with all-cause mortality.	Adults from nine countries in Europe	Pischon et al., 2008; Frank et al., 2019
Abdominal fat is related to the metabolic syndrome.	Older women and men	Goodpaster et al., 2005; Frank et al., 2019

14-4 Dieting

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 14-7** Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of three different dieting strategies
- 14-8** Evaluate the importance of physical activity in a weight-loss program
- 14-9** Describe the necessary behaviors for someone who has lost weight to maintain the loss
- 14-10** Discuss three disadvantages of dieting

Many people in the United States have some knowledge of the risks of obesity and even know about the risks of an unfavorable waist-to-hip ratio, but media portrayals of idealized thin bodies are even more influential in the motivation to diet (Wiseman et al., 2005). Despite the idealization of thinness, obesity in the United States began a sharp rise during the 1970s, which continued throughout the 1990s, and has not decreased significantly since (Fryar et al., 2018). Acceptance of the ideal body as thin, combined with the growing prevalence of overweight, produces a situation in which dieting and weight loss are the subjects of a great many people's concern. What are people doing to try to lose weight, and how well do these strategies work?

People are inundated with messages about diets—television, magazine, newspapers, and Internet popups are filled with advertisements for miracle diets that take off pounds almost effortlessly. Those diets may seem too good to be true, and they are. In September 2002, the U.S. Federal Trade Commission issued a report that described how widespread false and misleading diets have become (“Federal Trade Commission,” 2002). Despite the customer testimonials and the before-and-after photos, these “miracle” diets do not work. As U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona said, “There is no such thing as a miracle pill for weight loss. The surest and safest way to weight loss and healthier living is by combining healthful eating and exercising” (“Federal Trade Commission,” 2002, p. 8). This seemingly simple plan is far from easy to follow.

Unwise decisions abound in choice of diet. The trend toward dieting has become more severe in the past few decades. During the mid-1960s, only 10% of

overweight adults were dieting (Wyden, 1965), but during subsequent years those percentages steadily increased. A large interview study of adults in the United States (Han et al., 2019) showed that overweight increased and so did attempts to lose weight; over 40% had attempted to lose weight within the year before the survey. A study with adolescents showed that more than 60% of adolescent girls and 33% of adolescent boys were trying to lose weight (Chin et al., 2018). Unfortunately, those attempts are often unsuccessful, as Danny Cahill's experience demonstrated.

Approaches to Losing Weight

To lose weight or keep from gaining weight, people have several choices. They can (1) reduce portion size, (2) restrict the types of food they eat, (3) increase their level of exercise, (4) rely on drastic medical procedures such as fasting, diet pills, or surgery, or (5) use a combination of these approaches. Regardless of the approach, *all diets that prompt weight loss do so through restriction of calories.*

Restricting Types of Food Maintaining a diet consisting of a variety of foods with smaller portions is generally a reasonable and healthy strategy. A number of commercial diet programs take this approach, and a meta-analysis of these programs (Johnston et al., 2014) indicated that all are similarly effective in producing weight loss. However, a healthy, balanced diet does not lead to quick weight loss and is thus not the most common diet approach; many programs rely on restricting types of foods.

Common approaches to restricting types of food include restricting carbohydrates (such as the Atkins diet) or restricting fat (LEARN diet). A meta-analysis comparison of low-carbohydrate and low-fat diets (Sackner-Bernstein et al., 2015) indicated comparable effectiveness. Both approaches showed success, and despite warnings from nutritionists about the dangers of low-carbohydrate diet plans, people who follow these diets have not experienced unfavorable changes in cholesterol levels or risks for cardiovascular disease. In addition, these diets tend to produce lower dropout rates than low-fat diets (Hession et al., 2009). All of the diets produced significant weight loss compared to individuals who did not diet, but long-term weight loss is modest—in the 10- to 12-pound range.

Some diets are more extreme, restricting the eater to a limited group of foods, such as vegetarian or vegan diets, both low-fat and low-carbohydrate diet

(South Beach Diet), ketogenic diets, and the “paleo” diet (Spritzler, 2017). These diets all promote weight loss, but more severe restriction make it more difficult to obtain balanced nutrition. Maintaining a restrictive diet is even more difficult, and the ultimate examples are single food diets. All-fruit diets, egg diets, cabbage soup diet, and even the ice cream diet fall into this category. Of course, such diets are nutritional disasters. They produce weight loss by restricting calories; dieters get tired of the monotony of one food and eat less than they would if they were eating a variety. “All the hard-boiled eggs you want” turns out to be not many!

Taking monotony a step further are the liquid diets, which exist in a variety of forms and under various brand names. Liquid diets have the advantage of being nutritionally more balanced than most restricted food diets. Still, liquid diets and their equivalent meals in the form of shakes or bars have the disadvantage of being monotonous and repetitive and tend to be low in fiber. Like all other diets, these work by restricting calorie intake. Although current researchers may disagree on the advantages of low-fat or low-carbohydrate diets, they are likely to agree that diets high in fiber from fruits and vegetables are good choices (Schenker, 2001). However, even this approach can be successful. An intensive behavioral program using meal replacements (Anderson et al., 2007) was successful for very overweight people, producing weight losses of 50 to 100 pounds, with better maintenance rates than most diet programs. For other dieters, these programs may not be so successful. In a meta-analysis of commercial diet programs for healthy, overweight adults (McEvedy et al., 2017), over half of the participants did not lose 5% of their body weight, and many failed to complete the program.

In conclusion, all food restriction strategies can be successful in producing weight loss, but many are bad approaches. Most of these diets fail to teach new eating habits that people can maintain over the long term. This problem was a factor for Danny Cahill; he lost over 200 pounds but gained 100 of them back. The metabolic slowdown that Cahill and other *Biggest Loser* contestants experienced made it difficult to maintain their weight loss, but so did their previous eating habits.

Behavior Modification Programs Although dieting should be considered a permanent modification in one’s eating habits, such change is difficult. The behavior modification approach toward treating weight loss begins with the assumption that eating is a behavior that is subject to change. This application of behavioral theory

was originated by Richard Stuart (1967), who reported a much higher success rate than that achieved through previous diet approaches. Most behavior modification programs focus on eating and exercise, helping overweight people to monitor and change their behavior. Clients in these programs often keep eating diaries to focus their awareness on the types of foods they eat and under what circumstances, as well as to provide data the therapist can use to devise a personal plan for changing unhealthy eating habits. The outcome of one weight loss trial (Hollis et al., 2008) indicated that dieters who kept a diary lost twice as much weight as those on the same program who did not. In addition, exercise goals are a typical component of behavior modification programs. The most common format for such programs is a group setting with weekly meetings that include instruction in nutrition and in self-monitoring to attain individual goals (Wing & Polley, 2001). Almost all weight-control programs include some modification of eating, physical activity, or both, and these programs may be referred to as behavioral or behavior modification programs (Wadden et al., 2005).

Because weight loss is not a behavior, these behavioral programs tend to reinforce good eating habits rather than the number of pounds lost—behaviors, not the consequences, are the targets for reward and change. People who are overweight to moderately obese may be fairly successful in these types of programs (Moldovan & David, 2011). The goal is typically gradual weight loss and maintenance of that loss (Castellnuovo et al., 2017). The average amount of weight lost is about 20 pounds over six months, but dieters maintain only about 60% of that loss over a year (Wing & Polley, 2001). Thus, even moderate, gradual weight loss may be difficult to maintain.

Exercise The importance of exercise in weight loss has become increasingly apparent (Wu et al., 2009). Exercise alone is not as effective for weight loss as dieting (Verheggen et al., 2016), but adding physical activity to a program to change eating is important. Because metabolic rate slows down when food intake decreases, physical activity can counteract this metabolic slowdown and thus may be an indispensable part of weight reduction and maintenance. A large-scale survey of dieters (“Federal Trade Commission weighs in on losing weight,” 2002) found that 73% of successful dieters exercised at least three times a week, and a meta-analysis of successful components in a diet program (Wu et al., 2009) indicated that physical activity

was such a component. Exercise can also change body composition, adding muscle while dieting decreases fat levels (Verheggen et al., 2016). (The role of exercise is discussed more fully in Chapter 15.) Both adding an exercise component and changing eating habits are substantial lifestyle changes, which is consistent with the difficulty of losing weight and keeping it off.

Drastic Methods of Losing Weight People sometimes choose drastic measures to lose weight, and physicians sometimes recommend drastic measures for severely obese patients. Even with medical supervision, some weight reduction programs present risks, sometimes to the point of being life threatening.

One approach that has turned out to carry substantial risks is taking drugs to reduce appetite. In the 1950s and 1960s, amphetamines were widely prescribed as diet pills to increase the activity of the nervous system, speed up metabolism, and suppress appetite. Unfortunately, the effects are short term, and dependence may become a more serious problem than obesity. Increasing evidence of the dangers of amphetamines led to the development of other diet drugs, but the quest for a safe, effective drug that helps people lose weight has proven difficult. Currently available drugs in the United States include orlistat (Xenical, Alli), naltrexone hydrochloride-bupropion hydrochloride (Contrave), phentermine-topiramate (Qsymia), lorcaserin hydrochloride (Belviq), and liraglutide (Saxenda), which offer the possibility of statistically significant yet modest weight loss (Khera et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2020). The developing knowledge of hormones and neurochemicals related to weight regulation suggests that more effective drugs are possible (Williams et al., 2020), but that promise has not developed into a safe drug that is effective for major weight loss. Thus, a growing number of obese people are turning to surgery as a way to manage their weight.

Several types of surgery can affect weight, but most current surgeries either restrict the size of the stomach by gastric banding (placing a band around the stomach), sleeve gastrectomy (decreasing the size of the stomach), or gastric bypass (routing food around most of the stomach and part of the intestines) (American Society of Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery [ASMBS], n.d.). People are candidates for these surgeries if their BMI is 40 or higher or if their BMI is 35 or higher and they have health problems that make weight loss imperative. These procedures are successful in promoting drastic weight loss and changing eating behaviors (Chang et al., 2014). Like any surgery, these procedures carry some risks, and patients typically must be

prepared to monitor their food intake and to take nutritional supplements for the rest of their lives (Tucker et al., 2007). However, the benefits outweigh the risks for many obese individuals. These changes in weight and metabolism improve diabetes, hypertension, and other risk factors for cardiovascular disease. In 2016, 216,000 people in the United States underwent some type of bariatric surgery (English et al., 2018).

Another surgical approach to weight loss is to remove adipose tissue through a fat-suctioning technique called liposuction. The technique reshapes the body rather than produce an overall weight loss (Bellini et al., 2017). Thus, liposuction is mainly a cosmetic procedure to change body shape, not a way to lose weight or produce health benefits. Despite the discomfort and expense of the surgery, liposuction became one of the most common types of plastic surgery (English et al., 2018). Like all surgery, it presents risks such as infection and reactions to anesthesia. A less invasive procedure to change body shape is *cryolipolysis*, which uses cold to damage fat cells and cause their disintegration. This procedure also produces body contour changes with less risk than liposuction and is also a cosmetic rather than health-related choice (Ingargiola et al., 2015).

Drastic means of losing weight are poor solutions to obesity for most people. However, they are fairly common. High school girls reported using drastic strategies for weight loss such as fasting (18.7%), taking appetite suppressant drugs (6.6%), and using laxatives or purging (6.6%); a large majority (62.6%) reported that they were dieting (Kann et al., 2014). Having a friend who uses these methods increases adolescent girls' risks for doing so (Eisenberg et al., 2005); being overweight raises the percentages of those who have used such methods to 40% for girls and 20% for boys (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 2007). All these drastic means of losing weight can be dangerous. In addition, all are difficult to maintain long enough to produce significant weight loss. Even when dieters succeed with these strategies, they usually regain the weight they have lost because these approaches do not enable them to learn how to make good diet choices for permanent weight loss. As Danny Cahill and other *Biggest Loser* contestants have experienced, keeping weight off is a major challenge, regardless of weight loss method.

Maintaining Weight Loss In Chapters 12 and 13, we saw that about two-thirds of the people who initially quit smoking or stop drinking will relapse. For people who succeed in losing weight, maintaining that loss is comparably difficult. One systematic review of commercial

weight loss programs (Tsai & Wadden, 2005) indicated that people who managed to lose weight on these programs (not all do) had a high probability of regaining 50% of the weight they lost within one to two years. Results from another meta-analysis (Johnston et al., 2014) found that dieters regained less than 20% of the weight they lost after 12 months.

Effective formal weight reduction interventions typically include posttreatment programs to help dieters maintain weight loss, which makes these programs more successful than those that lack a posttreatment phase. For example, a comparison of two follow-up interventions in dieters who had completed a six-month weight-loss program (Svetkey et al., 2008) included three groups of dieters. One group received no follow-up, one received an intervention that involved brief personal contact monthly, and another consisted of an interactive, technology-based intervention. The personal follow-up was more effective, but both interventions produced dieters who weighed less than before they started the program. Thus, the follow-up need not be intensive or complex; simple procedures can be effective. For example, people who lost weight and weighed themselves daily were less likely to regain the lost weight than those who did not step on the scales so often (Wing et al., 2007). Another possibility for self-monitoring comes from technology, and one study (Ross & Wing, 2016) demonstrated a successful strategy of combining technology tools for self-monitoring with phone support for sustained weight loss.

A survey by *Consumer Reports* (“The Truth About Dieting,” 2002) supplied information about more than

32,000 dieters, both successful and unsuccessful. This number confirmed that people have problems both with losing weight and with maintaining weight loss, but it also showed that some people are successful.

Most of the dieters in the *Consumer Reports* survey lost weight on their own rather than through a formal weight-loss program. Those who were successful tended to use a variety of approaches, including exercising and increasing physical activity, eating fewer fat-heavy and sweet foods, increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables, and cutting down on portion size. Not surprisingly, those dieters who were successful in maintaining their weight loss rarely used any of the drastic means of losing weight reviewed in the prior section, except for surgery; individuals who undergo surgery to lose weight tend to lose large amounts of weight and maintain some of that weight loss (Douketis et al., 2005). People who lose weight without surgery and keep it off tend to alter their eating and physical activity, forming new habits that they can maintain.

Childhood obesity has increased, even among children as young as preschool age, and has become a worldwide epidemic and thus of great concern (Spruijt-Metz, 2011). Interventions for this group may include strategies for preventing the development of overweight, dietary programs, family interventions, physical activity programs, school-based programs, or some combination of these elements. Although dietary modification can result in reducing weight among overweight children, a physical activity component boosts effectiveness (Vissers et al., 2016). A meta-analysis of programs for children and adolescents (Altman & Wilfley, 2015) indicated that



Dieting is common, even among those who do not need to lose weight for health reasons.

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family-based behavioral interventions and parent-guided behavioral interventions for children have well-established efficacy. Other types of interventions may also be effective, even interventions for overweight toddlers. However, all effective programs include multiple components that target behavioral and lifestyle changes and involve the family.

Is Dieting a Good Choice?

Although dieting can produce weight loss, it may not be a good choice for everyone. Dieting has psychological costs, may not be effective in improving health, and may be a signal of body dissatisfaction that is a risk for eating disorders. A group of dieters rated their overall experience as positive early in their diet (Jeffery et al., 2004), but as the dieting continued, positive feelings decreased. Some dieters exhibit strong reactions, behaving very much like starving people: They are irritable, obsessed with food, finicky about taste, easily distractible, and hungry. These behavioral reactions make dieting a poor choice for those who are close to the best weight for their health.

For those who are sufficiently overweight to endanger their health, dieting may still be an unwise choice. As the analysis of *The Biggest Loser* contestants (Fothergill et al., 2016) showed, dieting may produce changes in metabolism that make it very difficult to maintain the weight loss. Developing reasonable and healthy eating patterns is a far better choice than dieting. That is, dieting is not the same as eliminating overeating (Herman et al., 2008). The former may not be a good choice for many people, whereas the latter is a good choice for everyone.

One approach that emphasizes this strategy is Health at Every Size®, which seeks to remove the stigma from overweight, reject dieting to lose weight, and emphasize healthy eating plus physical activity (Bombak, 2014). This approach is consistent with a public health approach rather than a fashion-conscious approach to weight. A systematic review of research based on the application of Health at Every Size® indicated positive results for cardiovascular factors, eating behaviors, quality of life, and psychological indicators (Ulian et al., 2018). Thus, a weight loss-oriented diet program may not be the best choice for some overweight individuals.

Ironically, weight loss may even be a health risk for some people. Involuntary weight loss is often associated with disease, so the association between unintentional weight loss and mortality is no surprise. Older people are more likely to lose weight due to illness, and studies that considered participants' age indicated that younger

people are at risk from overweight but that after age 65, overweight is no longer a predictor of mortality (Kuk & Ardern, 2009); indeed, slight overweight may be an advantage (Winter et al., 2014). However, when overweight and obese adults were assigned randomly to a weight-loss program (Shea et al., 2010), those who lost weight did not experience any increase in mortality; indeed, their risk was lowered.

Thus, the benefits of weight loss may not apply equally to all people. Even modest weight loss can be important for individuals who are obese and who can maintain the loss. However, the risks of dieting may be greater than the risks of moderate, stable overweight (Gaesser, 2003). Obesity, however, is not healthy.

IN SUMMARY

Our culture's obsession with thinness has led to a plethora of diets, many of which are neither safe nor permanently effective. Most diets produce some initial weight loss in response to the restriction of caloric intake, but maintaining the reduced weight levels is a matter of permanent changes in basic eating habits and activity levels. Despite attempts to be thin, people in the United States are now heavier than ever because they have increased the number of calories they consume and lowered their amount of physical activity.

Losing weight is easier than weight-loss maintenance, but programs that include posttreatment and frequent follow-up can be successful in helping people maintain a healthy weight. Whether part of a formal program or a personal attempt, eating a variety of healthy foods and maintaining physical activity are more likely than drastic programs to result in long-term weight loss. Like programs for adults, programs for obese children and adolescents face similar challenges and include the same effective components—healthy food choices and physical activity.

Dieting is a good choice for some people but not for others. Obese people and those with a high waist-to-hip ratio should try to lose weight and keep it off. However, most people who diet for cosmetic reasons would be healthier (and happier) if they did not diet, and even people who are overweight may not experience health benefits from dieting. For everyone, including those who are overweight, an emphasis on healthy eating and physical activity will be more likely to improve health than many weight-loss diets.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Drastic means of losing weight include weight loss drugs and surgical procedures. Describe a person and situation in which either of these approaches would be a good choice.

14-5 Eating Disorders

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 14-11** Compare the symptoms and dangers of anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating
- 14-12** Discuss two psychological factors that make treatment for anorexia difficult
- 14-13** Construct profiles of someone who is at high risk for each of the three eating disorders, making sure to include family and personal background, gender, personal attitudes that increase the risk for each disorder
- 14-14** Compare treatment effectiveness for anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating disorder

The eating disorders that have received the most attention, both in the popular media and in the scientific literature, are anorexia nervosa and bulimia, but binge eating is also an eating disorder diagnosis (American Psychiatric Association [APA], 2013). An **eating disorder** is a serious and habitual disturbance in eating behavior that produces unhealthy consequences. This definition of an eating disorder excludes starvation resulting from the inability to find suitable food supplies and also unhealthy eating resulting from inadequate information about nutrition. Included are disturbances in eating behavior such as pica, or the eating of non-nutritive substances such as plastic and wood, and rumination disorder—that is, regurgitation of food without nausea or gastrointestinal illness. Neither of these disorders presents serious health problems, and they are of relatively minor importance in health psychology.

The term *anorexia nervosa* literally means lack of appetite due to a nervous or psychological condition; *bulimia* means continuous, morbid hunger. Neither meaning, however, is an accurate description of these disorders. **Anorexia nervosa** is an eating disorder that

includes intentional starvation and a distorted body image. People with anorexia nervosa have not lost their appetite. Ordinarily, they are perpetually hungry, but they insist that they do not wish to eat.

Bulimia has come to mean more than continuous, morbid hunger. The chief identifying mark of this eating disorder is repeated bingeing and purging, the purge usually coming after eating huge quantities of food, typically high in calories and loaded with carbohydrates, fat, or both. Eating large quantities of food is critical to the definition of binge eating; people with this disorder binge but do not purge, resulting in overweight and obesity.

These three eating disorders obviously have much in common. Indeed, some authorities regard anorexia and bulimia as two dimensions of the same illness. Others see the three as separate but related disorders (Polivy & Herman, 2002). For example, binge eating is common to all three. In addition, the core components of all three include body dissatisfaction combined with preoccupation with food, weight, and body shape. The basis for body dissatisfaction is easy to understand: Overweight and obesity have become more common, yet the ideal body is thin. This combination has created a discontent that touches everyone in the culture. Children as young as early elementary school age express body dissatisfaction (Brown & Slaughter, 2011; Damiano et al., 2015), and discontent with body shape is so common among women that it is the norm (Grogan, 2007; Rodin et al., 1985). However, only a small percentage of people with body dissatisfaction develop eating disorders, indicating that other factors operate to produce these disorders (Tylka, 2004).

Janet Polivy and Peter Herman (2002, 2004) suggested that body dissatisfaction constitutes an essential precursor to the development of eating disorders, but those who develop eating problems must also come to see being thin as a solution to other problems in their lives. People who channel their distress into body concerns and focus on their bodies to change their dissatisfaction have the cognitions that lead to eating disorders (Evans, 2003). Such cognitions include the feeling that being thin will lead to happiness.

Other risks for eating disorders include family and personality correlates such as a great deal of negative family interaction; a history of sexual abuse during childhood; low self-esteem; and high levels of negative mood, anxiety, and depression (Polivy & Herman, 2002). In addition, some genetic predisposition may contribute to the development of eating disorders, possibly through epigenetic mechanisms that influence the production of hormones and neurochemicals (Frank, 2016). For

example, the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine alter mood and may be involved in the negative mood and positive reinforcement value that are risk factors for eating disorders (Frank, 2016; Kaye et al, 2013). Leptin is involved in hunger but also exerts a variety of actions in the brain that may be involved in disordered eating (Iceta et al., 2019; Zupancic & Mahajan, 2011). However, assessments of factors related to unhealthy weight control strategies (Liechty, 2010; Neumark-Sztainer et al, 2003) show that concern about body weight appears to be a primary factor in eating disorders.

Anorexia Nervosa

Despite the current focus on anorexia, neither the disorder nor the term is new. The first two documented cases of intentional self-starvation were reported by Richard Morton in 1689 (Sours, 1980). Morton wrote about an 18-year-old English girl who had died of the effects of anorexia some 25 years earlier and about an 18-year-old boy who had survived. Both had shown a remarkable indifference to starvation, and both had been described as sad and anxious. In London, Sir William Gull (1874) studied several cases of intentional self-starvation during the 1860s. He regarded the condition as a psychological disorder and coined the term *anorexia nervosa* to indicate loss of appetite due to “nervous” causes—that is, psychological factors.

During the 1940s and 1950s, psychiatrists who took a psychoanalytic view hypothesized that the ailment was a denial of femininity and a fear of motherhood. Other theorists suggested that it represented an attempt on the part of the young woman to re-establish unity with her mother. Unfortunately, none of these hypotheses expanded the scientific understanding of anorexia nervosa. The past six decades have seen a shift away from this sort of speculation and a turn toward the view that anorexia involves a complex of sociocultural, family, and biological factors (Frank, 2016; Polivy & Herman, 2002). Recent emphasis has been on describing the disorder in terms of behaviors and their physiological effects, demographic correlates, and effective treatment procedures.

What Is Anorexia? Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder characterized by intentional self-starvation or semistarvation, sometimes to the point of death. People with anorexia are extremely afraid of gaining weight and have a distorted body image, seeing themselves as being too heavy even though they are exceedingly thin.

Research using brain imaging (Sachdev et al., 2008) has revealed that women with anorexia process images of their own bodies differently than they do images of other women’s bodies—even when the two bodies are the same weight.

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th edition [DSM-5], APA, 2013) defines *anorexia nervosa* as intentional weight loss to a point that the person weighs less than a normal weight for a person with similar age, sex, and developmental status, along with a fear of being fat, and a distorted body image.

The DSM-5 (APA, 2013) identifies two subtypes of anorexia: the restricting type and the binge–purge type. Individuals with the restricting type eat almost nothing, losing weight by dieting, fasting, exercising, or a combination of these strategies. Those with the binge–purge type may eat large quantities of food and use vomiting or laxatives to purge the food they have eaten. Alternatively, these people with anorexia may eat small amounts of food and purge. Research has confirmed that these two subtypes are distinct (Kaye, 2008). Purging is typical of bulimia, and binge eating occurs in binge eating disorder, but people with bulimia use purging to maintain a normal body weight. People with anorexia purge to lose weight.

Anorexia is not confined to any demographic group, but young women are at higher risk than older women or men of any age. Typically, they are preoccupied with food, may like to cook for others and insist that others eat their food, but eat almost nothing themselves. They lose from 15% to 50% of their body weight yet continue to see themselves as overweight. These young women tend to be ambitious, perfectionist, from high-achieving families, and unhappy with their bodies. People with anorexia are preoccupied with body fat, which usually leads to a strenuous program of exercise—dancing, jogging, doing calisthenics, or playing tennis. Excessively active and energetic behavior continues until their weight loss reaches a level that produces fatigue and weakness, limiting their activity.

After substantial weight loss has occurred, individual differences tend to disappear, and accounts of individuals with the disorder are remarkably similar. Interestingly, many of the characteristics match the sketch of starving conscientious objectors drawn by Keys et al. (1950). Thus, these characteristics are probably an effect of starvation and not its cause. As weight loss reaches more than 25% of one’s previous normal weight, the person constantly feels chilled, grows a soft, downy covering of body hair, loses scalp hair, loses interest in

sex, and develops an unusual preoccupation with food. As starvation nears a perilous level, the anorexic individual becomes more hostile toward family and friends who try to reverse the weight loss.

Many authorities, including Hilde Bruch (1973, 1978, 1982), have regarded anorexia nervosa as a means of gaining control. Bruch, who spent more than 40 years studying eating disorders and the effects of starvation, reported that prior to dieting, individuals with anorexia typically are troubled girls who feel incapable of changing their lives. These young women often see their parents as overdemanding and in absolute control of their life, yet they remain too compliant to rebel openly. They try to seize control of their life in the most personal manner possible: by changing the shape of their body. Short of force-feeding, no one can stop these young women from controlling their own body size and shape. Those with anorexia take great pleasure and pride in doing something that is difficult and often compare their superior willpower with that of others who are overweight or who shun exercise. Bruch (1978) reported that people with anorexia enjoy being hungry and eventually regard any food in the stomach as dirty or damaging.

Who Has Anorexia? Although anorexia is associated with Western culture, it appears in non-Western cultures around the world (Keel & Klump, 2003) and cuts across ethnic groups (Cheng et al., 2019; Marques et al., 2011). This diagnosis was once more common among upper-middle-class and upper-class women of European ancestry in North America and Europe, but a comparison of ethnic groups (Cheng et al., 2019) showed no differences in the prevalence of anorexia. This disorder has become more common than it was 50 years ago (Keel & Klump, 2003). However, anorexia nervosa is still a very rare disorder. An estimate of its prevalence among adolescent girls—the group with the most common occurrence—was less than 1% (Stice, Marti, & Rohde, 2013), with similar low figures for young women in Australia (Hay, Ginesi, & Mond, 2015).

Among some groups the incidence rates of anorexia are much higher. For example, 26% of young women who had competed in beauty pageants reported that they believed they had or had received a diagnosis of an eating disorder (Thompson & Hammond, 2003). The competitive, weight-conscious atmosphere of professional schools for dance and modeling prompt the development of anorexia, and 6.5% of dance students and 7% of modeling students met the diagnostic criteria for anorexia nervosa (Garner & Garfinkel, 1980).

A survey of college students involved in theater, dance, cheerleading, and athletics (Robles, 2011) indicated that 12% had been treated for eating disorders. Female athletes who participate in sports that emphasize appearance, thin body type, or low body fat are especially at risk (Torstveit et al., 2008). Level of involvement in these activities may be more at risk; for example, more elite dancers experience more frequent and severe symptoms of eating disorders (Thomas et al., 2005).

Individuals with anorexia often report family difficulties, but it is difficult to determine if the difficulties precede the onset of eating problems or are a result of them (Polivy & Herman, 2002). Family environment is important in several ways. Families with children who have eating disorders tend to include a lot of negative emotion and little emotional support. Family violence—either as an observer or a target—is a risk for eating disorders for both men and women (Bardy, 2008). In addition, a family member with an eating disorder raises the risk for others in the family (Tylka, 2004), but so does having friends with unhealthy weight control practices (Eisenberg et al., 2005) or joining a sorority (Basow et al., 2007). Thus, disordered eating is affected by social context as well as family dynamics. In addition, physical or sexual abuse is a more common experience in the history of those who are anorexic than for individuals who eat normally (Rayworth, 2004).

Over the years, a large majority of those diagnosed with anorexia have been women, who have been the focus of most research and treatment. The estimates that women have 90% of eating disorders come from diagnoses and clinical impressions rather than complete population data. With the changes in diagnostic criteria that occurred with the appearance of *DSM-5*, diagnoses among men have risen (Timko et al., 2019). Reviews of eating disorders in men (Jones & Morgan, 2010; Wooldridge & Lemberg, 2016) claim that more representative assessments of eating disorders reveal much higher numbers, with men constituting at least 20% of cases (Hudson et al., 2007). Thus, this eating disorder may be more common among men than the clinical impressions suggest.

Men with anorexia are quite similar to women with anorexia in terms of social class and family configuration, symptoms, treatment, and prognosis. However, men are more likely than women to exhibit high levels of physical activity as a symptom (Timko et al., 2019). In addition, men differ in terms of the factors that pushed them toward disordered eating (Ricciardelli et al., 2007). For example, some studies have found that

sexual orientation is a factor—more men with anorexia are gay (Boisvert & Harrell, 2009), but comparisons of symptoms and characteristics (Crisp et al., 2006; Timko et al., 2019) revealed more similarities than differences.

Boys and young men may take drastic measures to achieve their ideal body, just as girls and young women do (Olivardia et al., 2000; Wooldridge & Lemberg, 2016). The ideal body for boys is muscular, and escaping this indoctrination is as difficult as avoiding the thin body ideal is for girls (Mosley, 2009). However, both ideals share the abhorrence of fat. Thus, both women and men have concerns about body shape and size that may appear as disordered eating.

Treatment for Anorexia Two unfortunate situations exist concerning treatment for anorexia: This disorder has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric diagnosis, but no treatment has demonstrated a high degree of effectiveness (Cardi & Treasure, 2010). About 3% of all individuals with anorexia die from causes related to their disorder (Keel & Brown, 2010). Most die of cardiac arrhythmia, but suicide is also a frequent cause of death for those with the bingeing–purging type of anorexia (Foulon et al., 2007). Unfortunately, anorexia nervosa remains one of the most difficult behavior disorders to treat. Measures of treatment success indicate less than 40% remission (Eddy et al., 2017). However, follow-up assessment indicate more optimistic findings. Recovery continued, showing long-term improvement. More than 60% of those diagnosed with anorexia had recovered 20 years later.

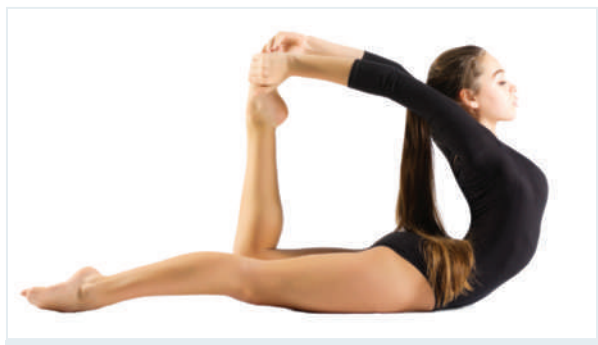
An initial complication for treatment is that most people with anorexia are focused on losing weight, resent suggestions that they are too thin, and resist any attempt to change their eating. That attitude appears on a number of websites hosted by individuals who are anorexic and promote it as a lifestyle alternative rather than a disorder (Davis, 2008). Readiness for change predicts more successful treatment (McHugh, 2007). Motivating people with anorexia to seek treatment is thus a major challenge that the application of motivational interviewing addresses (Hogan & McReynolds, 2004). This technique is a directive intervention to change attitudes about problems and make people more willing to work toward change.

As starvation continues, anorexia leads to fatigue, exhaustion, and possible physical collapse, and forced treatment. This situation seems undesirable, but even those who have been subjected to involuntary treatment later agreed that the intervention was justified (Tan et al., 2010). The immediate aim of almost any treatment

program for those who require hospitalization is medical stabilization of any physical dangers from starvation. Then, individuals with anorexia need to work toward restoration of normal weight, healthy eating, and improved body image.

Since the mid-1970s, cognitive behavioral therapy has become increasingly popular as a treatment for anorexia nervosa, and this approach has shown some success in changing both cognitive distortions that accompany body image problems and eating behavior (Fairburn & Harrison, 2003). Cognitive behavioral therapists attack these irrational beliefs while maintaining a warm and accepting attitude toward patients. People with anorexia are taught to discard the absolutist, all-or-nothing thinking pattern expressed in such self-statements as “If I gain one pound, I’ll go on to gain a hundred.” Addressing cognitive distortions may be an important component of therapy—a developing body of research indicates that those with anorexia experience significant cognitive distortions that apply to the processing of food-related words (Nikendei et al., 2008). In addition, they are more likely than others to believe that they cannot control their thoughts, and half reported that they used cognitive strategies to make themselves feel worse (Woolrich et al., 2008). The cognitive component of cognitive behavioral therapy has the potential to address these problems.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is not a great deal more effective than other types of psychological and multimodal interventions such as the standard programs for anorexia, which consist of individual and group therapy plus supervised meals, meal planning, and nutrition education (Williamson et al., 2001). Such programs are effective for some individuals with



Eating disorders are more common among models, dancers, and athletes whose sports demand thinness.

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anorexia, probably because these programs address both the cognitive and emotional issues as well as focusing on necessary changes in eating and nutrition (Zeeck et al., 2018). Although none of the treatments for anorexia show impressive success rates (Hay & de M. Claudino, 2010), researchers continue to search for improvements, especially in treating adults with anorexia (Brockmeyer et al., 2018).

For adolescents, the picture is somewhat more optimistic. An approach developed at the Maudsley Hospital in London emphasizes the role of family and family involvement in treatment for anorexia (Locke et al., 2001). Rather than treat parents as part of the problem, this approach accepts them as an essential part of the solution. Acknowledging that it is relatively easy to get anorexic patients to gain weight in the hospital, this approach focuses on helping them eat at home by equipping parents with strategies to get their children to eat. The value of including families in treatment of anorexia in adolescents has become well accepted (Cardi & Treasure, 2010; Couturier et al., 2013). Thus, effective treatments for adolescents differ from those that work well for adults, and adolescents are more likely to experience more success in treatment than adults (Zeeck et al., 2018).

Treatment of anorexia may also include drugs. However, evidence is lacking for the effectiveness of any drug, including antidepressants, antipsychotics, and mood stabilizers (Tortorella et al., 2014). Drugs alone are not effective in managing anorexia but adding drug therapy to behavioral treatment may boost effectiveness (Sanzone, 2018). Thus, the arsenal for treating this difficult disease remains understocked.

Relapse always remains a possibility. Even with intensive therapy that targets irrational eating patterns and distorted body image, some people treated for anorexia retain elements of these maladaptive thought processes. Some slip back to self-starvation, some attempt suicide, some become depressed, and some develop other eating disorders (Carter et al., 2004; Castellini et al., 2011). Follow-up care is often included in comprehensive programs, and cognitive behavioral therapy seems especially important in preventing relapses (Pike et al., 2003).

Bulimia

Bulimia is often regarded as a companion disorder to anorexia nervosa, and some individuals have moved from one diagnosis to the other (Eddy et al., 2007). Unlike those with anorexia, who rely mostly on strict fasts to lose more and more weight, individuals with bulimia consume

huge quantities of food in an uncontrolled manner (binge) and then purge, either by vomiting or by taking laxatives. The seemingly bizarre practice of binge eating followed by purging is not new. The ancient Romans sometimes indulged in very similar eating rituals. After they had feasted on great quantities of rich food, these Romans would retire to the vomitorium, empty their stomachs, and then return to eat some more (Friedländer, 1968). Unlike bulimia, this practice may not have been oriented toward weight control. Today, bulimia is defined as an eating disorder and affects millions of people.

What is Bulimia? As defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013), *bulimia nervosa* involves recurrent episodes of binge eating, a sense of lack of control over eating, and inappropriate, drastic measures to compensate for the binge. Some people with bulimia fast or exercise excessively, but most use self-induced vomiting or laxatives to maintain a relatively normal weight.

One factor that distinguishes bulimia from anorexia is lack of impulse control (Farstad et al., 2016), although this characteristic may apply to some people who are bulimic more strongly than to others (Myers et al., 2006). Those with bulimia often experience problems related to impulsivity, such as a history of alcohol or drug abuse, sexual promiscuity, suicide attempts, and stealing or shoplifting. This factor may be critical; a person may become bulimic rather than anorexic if they cannot resist the impulse to eat yet feels the body dissatisfaction that is common to both of these disorders.

Childhood experiences with sexual abuse, physical abuse, and posttraumatic stress are additional correlates of bulimia (Rayworth, 2004; Treur et al., 2005). In addition, recent involvement with sexual assault raises the risk (Fischer et al., 2010). A survey of a representative sample of bulimic women in the United States (Wonderlich et al., 1996) revealed that nearly one-fourth of all female victims of childhood sexual abuse displayed bulimic behaviors later on. In addition, these women tend to have more severe symptoms than others (Treur et al., 2005). A relationship also exists between bulimia and depression, but childhood sexual abuse is also related to depression, as are suicide attempts. Body image and eating disorders tend to precede the development of depression in adolescent girls (Kaye, 2008; Salafia & Gondoli, 2011), which suggests a developmental sequence and may allow the establishment of a chain of causality for the development of bulimia.

Who is Bulimic? In at least one way, the population of people with bulimia is quite similar to that of those with anorexia: Both eating disorders occur far more often in women than in men. Bulimia occurs with equal prevalence in various social classes and ethnic groups in the United States (Franko et al., 2007).

How prevalent is bulimia? Is its incidence increasing or decreasing? Bulimia is more prevalent than anorexia; about 1.5% of women in the United States and 0.5% of men meet the diagnostic criteria (Hudson et al., 2007). However, the rate may be as high as 4% to 7% who have symptoms (Wade, 2019); that is, many more have some symptoms but not enough to receive a diagnosis. For example, in a survey of high-school students (Kann et al., 2014), 6.6% of girls and 2.2% of boys said that they had vomited or used laxatives to lose or avoid gaining weight. These percentages reflect a high rate of these behaviors, which suggests a growing prevalence of bulimia symptoms. An analysis of the history of this disorder (Keel & Klump, 2003) indicated a substantial increase during the second half of the 20th century. Furthermore, bulimia differs from anorexia in its occurrence: Bulimia is restricted to Western cultures and those cultures influenced by Western values.

Is Bulimia Harmful? To many people, bingeing and purging may seem an acceptable means of controlling weight. For others, guilt is a nearly inevitable part of bulimia, and some mental health problems accompany this disorder. However, the question remains: Is bulimia harmful to physical health? Unlike anorexia nervosa, which has a mortality rate of 3% (Keel & Brown, 2010), bulimia is very seldom fatal (Steinhausen & Weber, 2010). Nevertheless, bulimia has serious health consequences.

The combination of both binge eating and purging is harmful in several ways. First, the intake of large quantities of sweets can result in **hypoglycemia**, or a deficiency of sugar in the blood. This may seem paradoxical because the typical binge eater consumes huge amounts of sugar, but the metabolism of sugar prompts insulin release, which drives down blood sugar levels. Low blood sugar results in dizziness, fatigue, depression, and cravings for more sugar, which may prompt another binge. Second, binge eaters seldom eat a balanced diet, and poor nutrition may lead to lethargy and depression. Third, binge eating is expensive. People with bulimia can spend more than \$100 a day on food and this expense can lead to other problems, such as financial difficulties or stealing. Also, binge eaters are preoccupied with food in an obsessive way, thinking

and planning the next binge. This obsession may leave individuals with bulimia with limited time to attend to other activities (Polivy & Herman, 2002).

Purging also leads to several physical problems (Mehler, 2011). One of the most common consequences of frequent vomiting is damaged teeth; hydrochloric acid from the stomach erodes the enamel that protects the teeth. Many people whose eating disorder has been lengthy need extensive dental work. Indeed, dentists are sometimes the first health care professionals to see evidence of bulimia. Hydrochloric acid may also lead to damage in the mouth and esophagus. Bleeding and tearing of the esophagus are not common among people with bulimia but are very dangerous. Some longtime sufferers report reverse peristalsis, an involuntary regurgitation of food, often after eating quite moderately. Other potential dangers of frequent purging include **anemia**, a reduction in the number of red blood cells; **electrolyte imbalance** caused by the loss of minerals such as sodium, potassium, magnesium, and calcium; and **alkalosis**, an abnormally high level of alkaline in the body tissues resulting from the loss of hydrochloric acid. These conditions may lead to weakness and fatigue. Purging through excessive use of laxatives and diuretics may lead to kidney damage, dehydration, and a spastic colon or the loss of voluntary control over excretory functions. In addition, ingredients in the substances used as laxatives may have toxic properties, adding to the dangers (Steffen et al., 2007). In summary, bulimia is not a harmless weight control strategy but a serious disorder with a multitude of potential dangers.

Treatment for Bulimia Treatment of bulimia has a critical advantage over therapy programs for anorexia nervosa—those with bulimia are more likely to be motivated to change their eating behaviors. Unfortunately, this motivation does not guarantee that those with bulimia will seek therapy or be successful in changing their behavior.

Cognitive behavioral therapy is the preferred treatment for bulimia (Cardi & Treasure, 2010; Wade, 2019). Cognitive behavioral therapists work toward changing both distorted cognitions, such as obsessive body concerns, and behaviors, such as bingeing, vomiting, and laxative use. Specific techniques may include keeping a diary on the factors related to bingeing and on feelings after purging, monitoring caloric intake, eating slowly, eating regular meals, and clarifying distorted views of eating and weight control. A systematic review of treatments for bulimia (Shapiro et al., 2007) revealed that cognitive behavioral treatment is effective, including assessments

at long-term follow-up. A later review (Hail & Le Grange, 2018) confirmed this finding but added information concerning therapy for young people; family-based therapy is more common and more effective for younger people.

Interpersonal psychotherapy has also been used successfully in treating bulimia (Tanofsky-Kraff & Wilfley, 2010). Interpersonal psychotherapy is a non-introspective, short-term therapy that originated as a treatment for depression. It focuses on present interpersonal problems and not on eating, taking the approach that eating problems tend to appear in late adolescence when interpersonal issues present major developmental challenges. In this view, eating problems represent maladaptive attempts to cope. The success rate of interpersonal therapy is comparable to that of cognitive behavioral therapy, but it does not work as quickly. Factors that relate to success include positive changes early in therapy, lower depression, fewer binge episodes, and motivation to change (Vall & Wade, 2015).

Although the antidepressant drugs are not very effective in treating anorexia, the results for bulimia are more positive (Tortorella et al., 2014). Behavioral therapy is a better choice for most patients than drugs alone, but the combination of drugs and psychotherapy may be a good choice for some people with bulimia.

Therapy for bulimia is usually successful (Keel & Brown, 2010); about 70% of individuals with bulimia recover as a result of therapy, and others improve. However, between 11% and 14% do not respond positively to therapy, and these individuals experience continuing problems with bingeing and purging, which may continue for years.

Preventing bulimia would be more desirable than treatment, and some programs attempt to change the attitudes that put people at risk. These programs are aimed at young women with the risk factors of low self-esteem, poor body image, high acceptance of the thin body ideal, a strong need for perfection, a history of repeated dieting, and other dysfunctional eating behaviors or attitudes. Some programs are school based, whereas others target young women at high risk. One typical strategy is psychoeducational, which attempts to change the acceptance of the thin body ideal and boost self-esteem. Adding a weight control component oriented toward building healthy eating while controlling weight has resulted in better success (Stice et al., 2005; Stice et al., 2003). The Body Project is another successful strategy, which involves attempting to create dissonance by encouraging participants to critique the thin ideal (Stice, Rohde, & Shaw, 2013). A review of prevention

programs (Stice, Becker, & Yokum, 2013) found that these programs reduce eating disorder onset by 60%. Thus, programs that address the cognitive component of bulimia and offer a healthy way to manage body concerns may be more successful in averting this disorder.

Binge Eating Disorder

Many people eat too much at times, such as parties or holidays, but binge eating disorder is more than an occasional overindulgence. Binge eating consists of the same type of out-of-control eating that is symptomatic of bulimia, but without any form of compensation. Binge eating disorder appeared as an official diagnosis in *DSM-5* (APA, 2013). To be diagnosed with this disorder, people must exhibit frequent binge eating episodes (an average of at least once a week for at least three months) with feelings of a lack of control, and they must experience distress over this behavior.

Who are Binge Eaters? Eating large quantities of food would seem to be a risk for obesity, and it is (Stice et al., 2002). Many individuals who are obese experience binge eating. An examination of women with eating disorders (Striegel-Moore et al., 2004) revealed that binge eaters had higher BMIs than women with other eating disorders and experienced an even greater degree of body dissatisfaction. Binge eating is common to bulimia and, to a lesser degree, to anorexia; thus, it is not surprising that individuals with any of these eating disorders exhibit similar self-esteem, body dissatisfaction, and weight concerns (Decaluwé & Braet, 2005; Grilo et al., 2008). Alcohol problems are also common to both people with bulimia and binge eaters (Krahn et al., 2005).

As with individuals who have anorexia, binge eaters are more likely to be female (3.5%) than male (2.0%), but binge eating is more common among men than anorexia or bulimia is (Hudson et al., 2007). Some researchers (Striegel et al., 2012) contend that men have been excluded from research on this disorder, creating an inaccurate impression; the prevalence is equal in both men and women. Children younger than 12 (Tanofsky-Kraff et al., 2008) and adolescents (Goldschmidt et al., 2008) are also affected by the loss of control that characterizes binge eating, which poses a major factor in obesity for these age groups. In addition, all ethnic groups are represented, and binge eating occurs in non-Western societies at rates that are similar to those in the United States and Europe (Becker et al., 2003). Binge eating is also more common than either anorexia or bulimia—the estimated prevalence is

at least 2% of the population. As with other eating disorders, most people with symptoms are not diagnosed and thus do not receive treatment.

Like others with eating disorders, people who experience eating binges also tend to have other behavioral or psychiatric problems, which complicates the diagnosis of this disorder (Hilbert et al., 2011; Stunkard & Allison, 2003). Indeed, the presence of personality disorders is

one criterion that distinguishes binge eaters from those who are obese but do not binge (Farstad et al., 2016; van Hanswijck de Jonge et al., 2003). **Table 14.5** presents a comparison of anorexia, bulimia, and binge eating.

Treatment for Binge Eating Treatments for binge eating face the challenge of changing an established eating pattern plus helping binge eaters lose weight.



BECOMING HEALTHIER

1. Develop your eating competence (Stotts et al., 2007).
Action Plan: Get good information about nutrition and use that information in deciding on a healthy diet that you will enjoy.
2. Give up dieting, but also give up overeating.
Action Plan: Construct an eating plan with at least a week of meals that satisfies you and that includes healthy choices.
3. Determine what is the correct weight for you.
Action Plan: Consult a chart that contains body mass index rather than a fashion magazine to determine what is the correct weight for you.
4. Do not focus on your weight or the amount of weight you are gaining or losing.
Action Plan: Become more concerned with eating a healthy diet than with your weight.
5. Food restriction and weight loss will not necessarily produce the body shape you find ideal.
Action Plan: If your body weight is less than the criterion for obesity, concentrate more on being healthy and focus on exercise to change your body shape.
6. Do not skip meals to lose weight.
Action Plan: Eat breakfast; people who eat breakfast are less likely to be overweight than those who skip it (Purslow et al., 2008).
7. Understand that media images furnish unrealistic and unattainable body images that tend to make people unhappy with their own bodies.
Action Plan: Explore information about how the media use technology to change images of bodies rather than show real people.
8. Understand that losing weight will not solve all your problems.
Action Plan: Make a list of your current problems, then list at least one way to go about dealing with each problem that does not involve losing weight. If you cannot think of a strategy to solve a problem, consult a counselor or other mental health care professional for assistance.
9. If you follow a weight loss plan and succeed, know when to stop.
Action Plan: Listen to people who tell you that you have lost enough weight. If you find these remarks annoying, know that your annoyance may signal the danger of progressing to an eating disorder.
10. When you make dietary changes, feelings of deprivation and going without favorite foods can make you too miserable to care about eating correctly.
Action Plan: Explore the concept of mindfulness applied to eating. Mindfulness training helps people to focus on the present and to be aware from moment to moment. This process can help you to awareness of what you are eating and to find enjoyment in the food you eat.
11. People who lose weight quickly tend to gain it back quickly, so drastic diets are a poor choice.
Action Plan: Avoid diet drugs, fasts, and very low-calorie diets to lose weight, even if you are obese.
12. Eating disorders often begin as diets, so beware the tendency to try some extreme steps to lose weight.
Action Plan: Do not vomit to keep from gaining weight; doing so is a big step toward bulimia.
13. Learn how to see someone who is normal weight or slightly overweight as attractive.
Action Plan: Look for people who are normal weight and overweight in the news and in the media and find their beauty.

TABLE 14.5 Comparison of Anorexia, Bulimia, and Binge Eating

	Anorexia	Bulimia	Binge Eating
Body weight	<17 BMI	Normal	Overweight
Distorted body image	Yes	Yes	Yes
Percent affected			
Women	0.9%	1.5%	3.5%
Men	0.3%	0.5%	2.0%
Vulnerability			
Gender	Women	Women	Women
Age	Adolescent and young adult	Adolescent and young adult	Adults
Ethnicity	All	All	All
Prominent characteristics	Ambitious, perfectionist, anxiety disorders	Impulsive, sensation-seeking	Personality disorders
Alcohol or drug abuse problems	Not common	Common	Common
Obsessive thoughts	Body fat and control	Food and next binge	Food and next binge
Health risks	3% mortality	Hypoglycemia, anemia, electrolyte imbalance	Obesity
Treatment success	<40% short-term but over 60% long-term	80%; relapse is a risk	Good success for binges but weight loss is difficult

Cognitive behavioral therapy has demonstrated effectiveness in helping people control binge eating (Hilbert et al., 2019), but it is not as effective in promoting weight loss (Striegel-Moore et al., 2010). Nor are obese binge eaters good candidates for weight loss surgery; this intervention does not help in managing binges (Yager, 2008).

Researchers have used several drugs to treat binge eating, which have only small effects as a treatment (Hilbert et al., 2019). However, when added to behavioral interventions several drugs boost effectiveness. One consideration was SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor) antidepressant drugs, which has some use in managing bulimia. These drugs produce a significant decrease in binge eating (Leombruni et al., 2008) but do not prompt weight loss. Adding the weight loss drug orlistat produced a modest weight loss (Reas & Grilo, 2008); the weight-loss drug sibutramine may be more effective (Yager, 2008). However, these results highlight the difficulties of addressing the two problem components that binge eaters encounter.

Perception of the problem also plays a role in treatment for binge eaters. Some people who experience binges seek treatment for the bingeing behavior,

whereas others see their main problem as overweight. Those who focus on their binge eating tend to choose cognitive behavioral therapy; those who see their problem as weight are more likely to choose a therapy with that goal (Brody et al., 2005). This type of tailoring is an advantage not only for binge eating but also for many therapies and problems.

An application of the concept of mindfulness meditation (see Chapter 8) to emotional eating appears to be a more effective treatment than others. Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness (Kristeller & Wolever, 2011) aims to address the emotional component that is prominent in binge eating by helping binge eaters to develop an awareness of the emotional underpinnings of their eating, become aware of physiologically based (rather than emotionally based) hunger, and exert conscious control over their eating behavior. Two systematic reviews of the effectiveness of this intervention (Carrière et al., 2018; Godfrey et al., 2015) indicated moderate-to-large effects for this approach. This success is an indication of the complexity of eating disorders and how effective treatment must often include multiple components.

IN SUMMARY

Some people begin a weight loss program that seemingly gets out of control and turns into an almost total fasting regimen. This eating disorder, called anorexia nervosa, is uncommon but most prevalent among young, high-achieving women who have high body dissatisfaction and believe that being thin will solve their problems. Anorexia is very difficult to treat successfully because people with this disorder continue to see themselves as too fat and thus resist attempts to change their eating habits. Some types of family therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy are more effective than other approaches.

Bulimia is an eating disorder characterized by uncontrolled binge eating, usually accompanied by guilt and followed by vomiting or other purgative methods. In general terms, people with bulimia are more likely than others to be depressed and impulsive, which may lead to alcohol and other drug abuse as well as stealing. In addition, they are more likely to have been victims of childhood sexual or family abuse, to be dissatisfied with their bodies, and to use food as a coping strategy.

Treatment for bulimia has generally been more successful than treatment for anorexia, partly because people with bulimia are more motivated to change. The more successful programs for eating disorders are those that include cognitive

behavioral techniques, which seek to change not only eating patterns but also the pathological concerns about weight and eating, and interpersonal therapy, which focuses on relationship issues. Anti-depressant drugs may also be useful in treating bulimia.

Binge eating appeared in *DSM-5* as an eating disorder. Those who experience binges are often overweight or obese and share impulse control and other psychological problems common to those with bulimia. Women are more likely to be binge eaters, but more men have this than any other eating disorder. Treatment faces the problems of altering maladaptive eating patterns and body image problems as well as promoting weight loss. Cognitive behavioral therapy is effective with the former, but losing weight is a difficult problem for binge eaters. Mindfulness-Based Eating Awareness is a new approach that appears to be more successful than others for Binge Eating Disorder.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Arrange to interview several university athletes, making sure to interview both female and male athletes, and ask them about how being an athlete has influenced their eating. Analyze their responses to look for gender differences and pressure to attain and keep a specific body weight.

Questions

This chapter has addressed six basic questions:

1. How does the digestive system function?

The digestive system turns food into nutrients by breaking down food into particles that can be absorbed. The process of breaking down food begins in the mouth and continues in the stomach, but absorption of most nutrients occurs in the small intestine. A complex signaling system involves hormones produced in the body and brain and received by the hypothalamus and other brain structures to control eating and weight. Hormones such as ghrelin, neuropeptide Y, agouti-related peptide, and melanin-concentrating hormone increase appetite and feelings of hunger, whereas leptin, insulin, cholecystokinin, glucagon-like peptide 1, and peptide YY are involved in satiation.

2. What factors are involved in weight maintenance?

Weight maintenance depends largely on two factors: the number of calories absorbed through food intake and the number expended through body metabolism and physical activity. Experimental starvation has demonstrated that losing weight leads to irritability, aggression, apathy, lack of interest in sex, and preoccupation with food. Initial weight loss may be easy, but a slowing metabolic rate makes drastic weight loss difficult. Experimental overeating has demonstrated that gaining weight can be almost as difficult and unpleasant as losing it.

3. What is obesity, and how does it affect health?

Obesity can be defined in terms of percent body fat, body mass index, or social standards, all of which yield different estimates for the prevalence of

obesity. Over the past 35 years, obesity has become more common in countries around the world, but in many Western countries, the ideal body has become thinner. The difficulty of either losing or gaining weight and the discovery of leptin, ghrelin, and other hormones involved in weight regulation are consistent with the notion of a natural set-point for weight maintenance. Obesity seems to be a deviation from this regulation that has genetic components, but the recent rapid growth of obesity is not compatible with a model that depends completely on genes. An alternative view holds that positive aspects of eating lead people to overeat when a variety of tasty foods are available, which is the situation in the United States and other high-income countries.

Obesity is associated with increased mortality, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and digestive tract diseases. The very heaviest—but also the very thinnest—people are at the greatest risk for death. Severe obesity and carrying excess weight around the waist rather than hips are both risks of death from several causes, especially heart disease.

4. Is dieting a good way to lose weight?

A cultural obsession with thinness has led to a plethora of diets, many of which are neither safe nor permanently effective. Changing from overeating to healthier eating patterns and incorporating physical activity are wise choices for weight change, whereas liposuction, diet drugs, fasting, and low-calorie diets are not.

5. What is anorexia nervosa, and what treatments are effective?

Anorexia nervosa is an eating disorder characterized by self-starvation. This disorder is most prevalent among young, high-achieving women with body image problems, but anorexia is uncommon, affecting less than 1% of the population. Individuals with anorexia are very difficult to treat successfully because they continue to see themselves as too fat and thus lack the motivation to change their eating habits. Cognitive behavioral therapy and a specific type of family therapy are more effective than other approaches.

6. What is bulimia, and how does it differ from binge eating?

Bulimia is an eating disorder characterized by uncontrolled binge eating, usually accompanied by

guilt and followed by vomiting or other purgative methods. Bulimia is more common than anorexia, affecting between 1% and 2% of the population. Their motivation to change eating patterns has made people with bulimia better therapy candidates than those with anorexia. Treatment for bulimia, especially cognitive behavioral therapy and interpersonal therapy, has generally been successful.

Binge eating is similar to bulimia in terms of binges, but binge eaters do not purge. Thus, they are often overweight or obese, whereas individuals with bulimia tend to be normal weight. Binge eating is also more common than bulimia, especially among men. The two disorders are similar in terms of impulsivity, history of family violence, and coexisting personality disorders. Binge eating is a challenge for treatment because therapy must address both binge eating and weight problems.

Suggested Readings

- Brownell, K. D., & Horgen, K. B. (2004). *Food fight: The inside story of the food industry, America's obesity crisis, and what we can do about it*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. In this controversial book, Kelly Brownell and Katherine Horgen contend that obesity is the result not of a lack of willpower but of a “toxic food environment” created by the food industry.
- Hurley, D. (2011, June). The hungry brain. *Discover*, 32(5), 53–59. Hurley's readable story reviews research on the complexities of the physiology and neurochemistry of eating and obesity.
- Polivy, J., & Herman, C. P. (2004). Sociocultural idealization of thin female body shapes: An introduction to the special issues on body image and eating disorders. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 23, 1–6. These prominent researchers provide an interesting perspective on eating and eating disorders, which summarizes the findings of articles from a special issue devoted to this topic.
- Popkin, B. (2009). *The world is fat: The fads, trends, policies, and products that are fattening the human race*. New York, NY: Avery/Penguin. Barry Popkin takes a worldwide view of eating and obesity, examining how obesity has become a more urgent problem than hunger.



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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 15-1** For each of the types of exercise, describe which of the fitness goals that each type of exercise promotes
- 15-2** Analyze the reasons for exercising, describing how each reason furthers health goals or other goals
- 15-3** Explain the benefits and limitations of exercise as a way to control weight
- 15-4** Trace the history of research that demonstrates the relationship between physical activity and cardiovascular disease
- 15-5** Describe three mechanisms through which physical activity promotes cardiovascular health
- 15-6** Evaluate each of the other health benefits of physical activity, focusing on the impact of each on population health
- 15-7** Contrast the symptoms of exercise addiction with symptoms of drug addiction
- 15-8** Describe the conditions that increase the likelihood for injury during exercise and give an example of how to minimize each of these risks
- 15-9** Describe what factors are important in answering the question about appropriate levels of physical activity for health benefits
- 15-10** Evaluate the effectiveness of informational, behavioral, social, technology-based, and environmental engineering interventions for improving adherence to exercise regimens

CHAPTER 15

Exercising

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Ricky Gervais

Types of Physical Activity

Reasons for Exercising

- Physical Fitness
- Weight Control

Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health

- Early Studies
- Later Studies
- Do Women and Men Benefit Equally?
- Physical Activity and Cholesterol Levels

Other Health Benefits of Physical Activity

- Protection Against Cancer
- Prevention of Bone Density Loss
- Improved Sleep
- Control of Diabetes
- Psychological Benefits of Physical Activity

Hazards of Physical Activity

- Exercise Addiction
- Injuries from Physical Activity
- Death During Exercise
- Reducing Exercise Injuries

How Much Is Enough but Not Too Much?

Improving Adherence to Physical Activity

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on six basic questions:

1. What are the different types of physical activity?
2. Does physical activity benefit the cardiovascular system?
3. What are some other health benefits of physical activity?
4. Can physical activity be hazardous?
5. How much is enough but not too much?
6. What are effective interventions for improving physical activity?

Weight loss is one possible consequence of physical activity, as Ricky Gervais discovered. Indeed, weight loss is one of the most common reasons for why people initiate a physical activity routine. However, as you will learn in this chapter, physical activity has a multitude of benefits, aside from slimming one's waistline. Physical activity can reduce common health risks, improve mood, reduce stress, and improve cognitive functioning. Despite these benefits, many people do not adhere to recommendations for physical activity, and we will describe some strategies that help people stick to physical activity goals. Also, in this chapter, you will learn that the benefits of physical activity persist across the lifetime. So, as Ricky Gervais noted, "It's never too late, never ever too late" to begin a lifestyle of physical activity.

15-1 Types of Physical Activity

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

15-1 For each of the types of exercise, describe which of the fitness goals that each type of exercise promotes

Although exercise can include hundreds of different kinds of physical activities, physiologically there are only five types of exercise: isometric, isotonic, isokinetic, anaerobic, and aerobic. Each has different goals, different activities, and different advocates. Each can contribute to some aspect of fitness or health, but only aerobic exercise produces benefits for cardiorespiratory health.

Isometric exercise involves contracting muscles against an immovable object. Although the body does not move in isometric exercise, muscles push hard against each other or against an immovable object and thus produce increases in strength. Pushing hard against a solid wall is an example of isometric exercise. This type of physical activity can improve muscle strength, which can be especially important for older people in preserving independent living.

Isotonic exercise requires the contraction of muscles and the movement of joints. Weightlifting and many forms of calisthenics fit into this category. Programs based on isotonic



Check Your Health Risks Regarding Exercise and Physical Activity

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Whenever the urge to exercise comes over me, I sit down until the urge goes away. <input type="checkbox"/> 2. My family history of heart disease means that I am going to have a heart attack whether I exercise or not. <input type="checkbox"/> 3. When it comes to exercise, I subscribe to the motto “No pain, no gain.” <input type="checkbox"/> 4. I have changed jobs so I can have more time to train for competitive athletic events. <input type="checkbox"/> 5. I use exercise along with diet as a means of controlling my weight. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 6. People have advised me to start an exercise program, but I just never seem to have the time or energy. <input type="checkbox"/> 7. One of the reasons I exercise is that I believe that a person can’t be too thin and that exercise will help me continue to lose weight. <input type="checkbox"/> 8. I may begin an exercise program when I’m older, but now I’m young and in good shape. <input type="checkbox"/> 9. I’m too old and out of shape to begin exercising. <input type="checkbox"/> 10. I’d probably have a heart attack if I started to jog or run. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 11. I’d like to exercise, but I can’t run, and walking isn’t strenuous enough to be good exercise. <input type="checkbox"/> 12. I try not to let injuries interfere with my regular exercise routine. |
|--|---|---|

Except for item 5, each of these items represents a health risk from either too little or too much exercise. Count your checkmarks to evaluate your risks. As you read this chapter, you will learn that some of these items are riskier than others.



Real-World Profile of RICKY GERVAIS



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Soon after Christmas, at the age of 48, comedian and actor Ricky Gervais realized he needed to change his habits. It wasn’t a health scare, a new acting role, or the desire to look fit that led him to this conclusion. Rather, he looked down on an empty plate, a plate that not long before had 11 sausages on it. Ricky had eaten all of them in short time. He felt horribly ill, “like a snake just trying to digest it.” Ricky thought to himself, “That’s ridiculous . . . I hit 14 stone” (the equivalent of 200 pounds). “Things were getting out of control” (“Ricky Gervais had sausage binge,” 2010).

Ricky changed his behavior, but he didn’t focus his attention on losing weight or going on a diet. Rather, he focused on exercising. He began a regimen that involved 55 minutes a day of exercising. His choice of 55 minutes was deliberate: “It’s a psychological thing. If it’s under an hour, you don’t feel it’s taking up a huge amount of your day and you can do other stuff” (“MH Interview: Ricky Gervais,” 2012).

Although his aim was not necessarily to lose weight, the public saw a different image of Ricky when he hosted the 2010 Golden Globe Awards. Ricky looked thinner, he looked fitter. He had dropped 20 pounds.

Gervais did not change his diet by much, saying that his aim in increasing exercise was to “stay alive and eat more cheese and drink more wine” (Men’s Health, 2012). Gervais focused on jogging daily and working out in his home gym, a strategy that worked for several years (Johnson, 2020). However, Gervais came to find it increasingly difficult to keep from gaining weight by exercise alone. By 2020, when he was 58 years old, he was dealing with the dilemma he talked about in 2010: “I would love to lose more weight actually but not by cutting calories. I will do it, if I can, by upping my workout even more. If this doesn’t work, then fine. I will be fit and heavy” (Gervais, 2010). He became heavier than his goal but still worked toward maintaining his fitness.

exercise can improve muscle strength and muscle endurance if the program is sufficiently lengthy. Again, older people can benefit from isotonic exercise, but many people in a weightlifting program are bodybuilders interested in improving the appearance of their body rather than improving health.

Isokinetic exercise is similar to isotonic exercise, except that isokinetic exercise involves exerting effort to move muscles and joints against a variable amount of resistance. This type of exercise requires specialized equipment that adjusts the amount of resistance according to the amount of force applied. People who suffer muscle injuries often receive prescriptions to perform isokinetic exercise to restore muscle strength and endurance. Isokinetic exercise is an important adjunct in physical rehabilitation, helping injured people to regain strength and flexibility with more safety than other types of exercise.

Anaerobic exercises require short, intensive bursts of energy but no increased amount of oxygen use. This form of exercise includes short-distance running, some calisthenics, softball, and other exercises that require intense, short-term energy. Such exercises improve speed and endurance, but they may carry risks for people with coronary heart disease.

Aerobic exercise is any exercise that requires dramatically increased oxygen consumption over an extended period of time. Aerobic exercise includes jogging, walking at a brisk pace, cross-country skiing, dancing, rope skipping, swimming, cycling, and other activities that increase oxygen consumption.

The important characteristics of aerobic exercise are intensity and duration. Exercise must be intense enough to elevate the heart rate into a certain range, based on a person's age and maximum possible heart rate. This type of program requires elevated oxygen use and provides a workout for both the respiratory system, which furnishes the oxygen, and the coronary system, which pumps the blood. Of the various approaches to fitness, aerobic activity is superior to other types of exercise in developing cardiorespiratory health.

Current recommendations call for a person to engage in some aerobic exercise at least three times a week. However, any aerobic exercise is better than none.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Construct a personal activity program, naming the types of exercise that would promote aerobic fitness, strength, endurance, and flexibility.

15-2 Reasons for Exercising

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 15-2** Analyze the reasons for exercising, describing how each reason furthers health goals or other goals
- 15-3** Explain the benefits and limitations of exercise as a way to control weight

People exercise for a variety of reasons, some that are consistent with good health and some that are not. Reasons for adhering to a physical activity program include physical fitness, weight control, cardiovascular health, increased longevity, protection against cancer, prevention of osteoporosis, diabetes control, better cognitive functioning, improved sleep, and as a buffer against depression, anxiety, and stress. This chapter looks at evidence relating to each of these reasons, as well as to the potential hazards of physical activity.

Physical Fitness

Does physical activity help people become physically fit? The effects of exercise on fitness depend both on the duration and intensity of the exercise and on the definition of fitness. To most exercise physiologists, fitness is a complex condition consisting of muscle strength, muscle endurance, flexibility, balance, and cardiorespiratory (aerobic) fitness. Each of the five types of exercise can contribute to these four different aspects of fitness, but no one type fulfills all the requirements.

In addition, fitness has both organic and dynamic aspects. *Organic fitness* is the capacity for action and movement determined by inherent characteristics of the body. These organic factors include genetic endowment, age, and health limitations. *Dynamic fitness* arises through physical activity, whereas organic fitness does not. A person can have a good level of organic fitness and yet be “out of shape” and perform poorly. Another person may train and improve dynamic fitness but still be unable to win races because of relatively poor organic fitness. Aspiring champions therefore must be blessed with organic fitness but also must also train to gain the dynamic fitness necessary for optimal athletic performance. Michael Phelps, the champion swimmer and holder of the most Olympic medals of all time, had an excellent balance of organic and dynamic fitness—he inherited a body suited to swimming, but he needed

to work hard to break records. The rest of this chapter deals almost exclusively with dynamic fitness and its components because this type of fitness arises from exercise, whereas organic fitness does not.

Muscle Strength and Endurance Two components of physical fitness are muscle strength and muscle endurance. Muscle strength is a measure of how strongly a muscle can contract. This type of fitness can come from isometric, isotonic, isokinetic, and to a lesser extent, anaerobic exercise. All these types of exercise have the capability to increase muscle strength because they involve contracting muscles.

Muscle endurance differs from muscle strength because it requires continued performance. Some strength is necessary for muscle endurance, but the opposite is not true: A muscle may be strong but not have the endurance to continue its performance. Exercises that improve strength require greater exertion for limited repetitions; exercises that improve endurance require less exertion but more frequent repetition (Knuttgen, 2007). Both muscle strength and muscle endurance improve through similar types of exercises, including isometric, isotonic, and isokinetic.

Flexibility Flexibility is the range-of-motion capacity of a joint. The types of exercises that develop muscle strength and muscle endurance generally do not improve flexibility. Moreover, flexibility is specific to each joint, so that exercises designed to develop flexibility are varied. In addition to being a component of fitness, flexibility also decreases the likelihood of injury in other types of physical activity, especially aerobic and anaerobic exercise.

Slow and sustained stretching exercises promote muscle flexibility. In contrast, fast, jerky, bouncing movements cause muscle soreness and injury. Flexibility training is typically not as intense as strength and endurance training. Yoga and tai chi provide the types of movements that increase flexibility.

Aerobic Fitness Of all the types of physical activity, aerobic exercise contributes most to cardiorespiratory fitness. When people acquire aerobic fitness, they improve cardiorespiratory health in several ways. First, they increase the amount of oxygen available during strenuous exercise; and second, they increase the amount of blood pumped with each heartbeat. These changes result in a lowering of both resting heart rate and resting blood pressure and increase the efficiency of the cardiovascular system (Cooper, 2001).

This type of exercise helps protect both men and women from heart disease and a variety of other diseases (Murphy et al., 2007).

Weight Control

Obesity continues to be a worldwide problem (WHO, 2020). Many people adopt a sedentary lifestyle, spending much of their time watching television, viewing videos, playing computer games, surfing the Internet, and talking on cell phones. There is a link between a sedentary lifestyle and overweight, as research shows that physical activity contributes to weight control (Wu et al., 2009).

Most experts see obesity as a long-term accumulation of excess body fat (Forbes, 2000; Hansen et al., 2005). Obesity can arise over time, when a person's dietary caloric intake exceeds energy expenditure through physical activity. However, the level of exercise needed for cardiovascular health is not necessarily the same as that needed for weight control. For example, 15 minutes of walking or cycling to and from work can be enough to reduce both cardiovascular mortality and all-cause mortality (Barengo et al., 2004). As Ricky Gervais discovered, the amount of exercise necessary to prompt weight loss is far greater. Some authorities (Hill & Wyatt, 2005; Jakicic & Otto, 2005) recommend that obese people need to spend at least 60 minutes a day engaged in moderate-to-heavy physical activity to bring about initial weight loss and to maintain that loss. Thus, longer and more intense physical activity is required for long-lasting weight control; this amount exceeds the amount of physical activity needed for cardiovascular health.

Exercise can also serve as a means for sculpting an ideal body shape. Unfortunately, exercise is limited as a method of spot reduction. Muscle and fat have little to do with one another, and a person can have both in the same part of the body. If people exercise during weight reduction, they build muscle tissue while losing fat, which may build a more attractive body shape. Spot reduction appears to be the result because fat tends to be lost from the places where it was most abundant. However, fat distribution is under strong genetic control, and people with large hips or thighs in relation to other body parts will have large hips or thighs after they lose weight. Despite some exercise promoters' claims, a particular calisthenic exercise will not reduce fat in a specific part of the body.

Inactive people who are concerned about weight and who have recently stopped smoking should

strongly consider beginning a physical activity program. Steven Blair and Tim Church (2004) claimed that such an exercise program would be at least as effective as dieting in controlling weight and much better than dieting in changing the ratio of fat to muscle tissue. An early study supported this view. Investigators randomly assigned sedentary, obese men to one of three groups: dieters, runners, or controls (Wood et al., 1988). The dieters did not exercise, the runners did not diet, and the controls did neither. After a year, people in both the exercise group and the dieting group had lost about the same amount of weight, and both groups had lost more than people in the control group. However, some important differences emerged in comparing the dieters and the runners. Although both groups had lost an equal amount of weight, the dieters lost both fat and lean tissue, whereas the runners lost only fat tissue and retained more lean muscle tissue.



Sedentary leisure activities add to the problem of childhood obesity.

Exercise does not produce much weight loss through burning calories; for example, more than 30 minutes of tennis is required to work off the calories in two doughnuts! However, sitting and eating doughnuts is a risk for obesity in two ways—the sitting and the eating. Sitting is a health risk independent of one's level of moderate and vigorous physical activity (Biswas et al., 2015; Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee (PAGAC), 2018); that is, one may engage in regular bouts of physical activity, but there may be risks to spending the rest of the time sitting in a car, in front of a computer, or in front of a television. However, the risks of sedentary behavior are greater when few to no episodes of physical activity accompany it. Thus, sitting presents its own health risks.

Most of the weight loss associated with exercise comes from elevation of the metabolic rate, the rate at which the body metabolizes calories. Thus, physical activity can promote weight loss because the resulting increase in the number of calories burned can produce changes in weight that exceed the number of calories spent in any activity.

IN SUMMARY

Five basic categories subsume all forms of physical activity: isometric, isotonic, isokinetic, anaerobic, and aerobic. Each of these five exercise types has advantages and disadvantages for improving physical fitness, but only aerobic exercise benefits cardiorespiratory health.

People have a variety of reasons for maintaining an exercise regimen, including physical fitness, aerobic health, and weight control. The various types of exercise can increase dynamic fitness, strengthen muscles, improve endurance, and increase flexibility. Aerobic fitness reduces death not only from cardiovascular disease (CVD) but also from all causes.

One popular reason for remaining physically active is to control weight and achieve a sculpted body. Physical activity can help people lose weight, but its capacity for spot reduction is very limited. Overweight people can lose weight through moderate physical activity, highly active thin people can maintain lean body mass through proper diet, and people of moderate weight can increase lean body weight without an overall weight gain.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Examine the reasons for exercising, and rate how important each of those reasons is for you on a scale of 1 = not at all to 7 = extremely, then write a summary of that assessment.

15-3 Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Health

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 15-4** Trace the history of research that demonstrates the relationship between physical activity and cardiovascular disease
- 15-5** Describe three mechanisms through which physical activity promotes cardiovascular health

Nowadays, most people recognize the health benefits of physical activity. This knowledge, however, did not exist until relatively recently. During the early years of the 20th century, physicians often advised patients with heart disease to avoid strenuous physical activity, based on the belief that too much physical activity could damage the heart and threaten a person's life. (Figure 9.7 in Chapter 9 paints a dramatic picture of the rise and fall of death rates from CVD throughout the 20th century.) During the middle of the 20th century, some cardiologists rethought this advice and recommended aerobic exercise both as an adjunct to standard treatment and as a protection against heart disease. Later in this section, we describe the cardiovascular benefits of exercise, but first we look briefly at the history of studies that examined exercise and cardiovascular health.

Early Studies

Jeremy Morris and his colleagues (Morris et al., 1953) made history with their observation of a link between physical activity and CVD. This observation took place in England and involved London's famous double-decker buses. Morris and his colleagues discovered that physically active male conductors differed from the sedentary drivers in their incidence of heart

disease. Ten years later, Harold Kahn (1963) investigated the relationship between physical activity and heart disease among postal workers in Washington, D.C. Kahn found lower coronary heart disease (CHD) death rates among the physically active men. These studies, of course, did not prove that physical activity decreased the risk of CHD, because the high- and low-activity workers may also have differed in body type, personality, or some other factor associated with a high or low risk of CHD.

Ralph Paffenbarger, a professor of epidemiology at Stanford University School of Medicine and the Harvard School of Public Health, built upon this earlier work with the publication of several landmark studies on the relationship between physical activity and CHD. The first studies followed a group of San Francisco longshoremen in 1951 and tracked CHD deaths over time (Paffenbarger et al., 1971; Paffenbarger, 1970). In general, they found that CHD death rates were much higher for workers with low activity versus high activity. In these studies, all workers in both the high- and low-activity groups had begun their employment with at least five years of strenuous cargo handling; thus, all workers were likely in good shape at the start of the study. Yet, physical activity level emerged as a significant predictor of subsequent risk for CHD death.

In the late 1970s, Paffenbarger and his associates (Paffenbarger et al., 1978) published a landmark epidemiological study based on extensive medical records of former Harvard University students, their weekly total energy expenditure, and a composite physical activity index that considered all activity, both on and off the job. With these data, Paffenbarger and his colleagues divided the Harvard alumni into high- and low-activity groups. Of those men whose energy levels could be determined, about 60% expended fewer than 2,000 kcal per week and placed in the low-activity group; the 40% who expended more than 2,000 kcal made up the high-activity group. (Note that 2,000 kcal of energy is approximately that expended in 20 miles of jogging or its equivalent.) The results showed that the least active Harvard alumni had an increased risk of heart attack over their more physically active classmates, with 2,000 kcal per week as the breaking point. In addition, exercise benefited men who smoked, had a history of hypertension, or both. Beyond the 2,000 kcal per week expenditure, increased exercise paid no dividends in terms of reduced risk of fatal or nonfatal heart attacks. **Figure 15.1** shows this relationship.

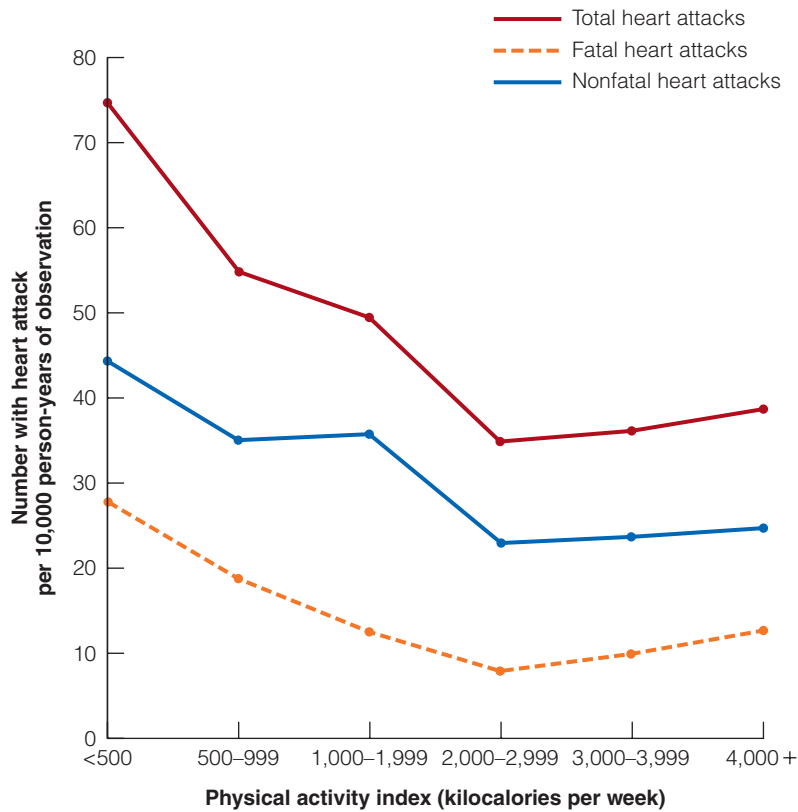


FIGURE 15.1 Age-adjusted first heart attack rates by physical activity index in a 6- to 10-year follow-up of male Harvard alumni.

Source: Adapted from “Physical activity as an index of heart attack risk in college alumni,” by R. S. Paffenbarger, Jr., A. L. Wing, and R. T. Hyde, 1978, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 108, p. 166. Copyright © 1978 by The Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health.

Later Studies

Dozens of more recent studies have examined the relationship between physical activity and cardiovascular mortality. A systematic review of these studies shows that physical activity confers a 35% reduction in risk of death due to cardiovascular causes (Nocon et al., 2008). The same review concludes that physical activity confers a 33% reduction in risk of death due to all causes. Furthermore, both men and women benefit from physical activity, but risk reductions may be larger for women than for men (Nocon et al., 2008). More recent reviews confirm this link (Lavie et al. 2019; PAGAC, 2018). A dose–response relationship exists between levels of vigorous physical activity and reduced risk of all-cause mortality (Samitz et al., 2011), and a large reduction in risk appeared when comparing people who reported no activity to those who reported low levels of light-to-moderate physical activity (PAGAC, 2018;

Woodcock et al., 2011). Thus, some activity is far better than none, but there are still benefits adding more activity to some activity.

Evidence also shows cardiovascular benefits among people from a variety of nations and different ethnic groups. For example, many Mexican Americans are at risk for obesity, high cholesterol, and other cardiovascular risk factors, suggesting that they can probably profit from a routine exercise program. A study of Mexican Americans in the San Antonio Heart Study (Rainwater et al., 2000) found that changes in physical activity over a five-year period tended to mirror changes in CVD risk factors.

Thus, it is unmistakably clear that physical activity protects against CVD (Myers, 2000; Lavie et al., 2019; PAGAC, 2018). First, people who are already active receive some gains by increasing their level of activity, but the largest gains occur when people go from a sedentary lifestyle to an active one. Second, walking, especially for older

people, confers protection against CVD (Murphy et al., 2007). Third, an inactive lifestyle is equal to diabetes, high cholesterol level, smoking, and high blood pressure as a CVD risk factor. Fourth, physically fit men and women in all age groups can reduce their CVD risk through leisure-time activities. Fifth, exercise accumulated several years ago does not provide much current protection against all-cause mortality. Similarly, people who survive a heart attack and who include physical activity as part of their cardiac rehabilitation program decrease their all-cause mortality as well as their risk for a subsequent heart attack. However, those benefits disappear after five years if participants stop exercising. Thus, because previous physical activity loses its benefit after a few years, heart attack survivors should maintain their exercise program.

Exercise also offers protection against stroke. Researchers from the Nurses' Health Study (Hu et al., 2000) found that the most active women, compared with sedentary women, reduced their risk of death from ischemic stroke by about 34%, compared with sedentary women. Furthermore, there was a dose-response relationship between levels of physical activity and protection from ischemic stroke. Individuals who had a stroke were less physically active than others, including less physical activity in the week preceding their stroke (Krarup et al., 2007). Similarly, a meta-analysis (Wendel-Vos et al., 2004) found that high levels of occupational and leisure-time physical activity reduce the risk of both ischemic stroke and hemorrhagic stroke.

These and other reports on CVD suggest that a lifestyle that includes at least some physical activity can help protect people against premature CVD, including stroke. Even small amounts of activity can help, but more is better, at least to a point. (In a later section, we discuss how much is enough without being too much.)

Do Women and Men Benefit Equally?

All the early studies on the cardiovascular effects of exercise had one important limitation: They focused exclusively on men. To complete the picture of the health benefits of exercise, later researchers extended their investigations to women. Gender differences in degree of physical activity, leisure-time activity, and job-related activity might suggest differences between men and women in their level of protection against CVD and all-cause mortality.

Do the benefits of physical activity extend to women as well as men? Paffenbarger and his associates

(Oguma et al., 2002) looked at 37 prospective cohort studies and one retrospective study that dealt with the association between all-cause mortality and both physical activity and physical fitness in women. The results indicated that women could gain about as much as men from physical activity, a finding confirmed in a more recent review (Nocon et al., 2008). Inactive women were much more likely than active women to have died during the study period. More recent reviews suggest benefits for reduced CVD, stroke, and overall mortality (Colpani et al., 2018) and the possibility that women may have even a greater reduction in all-cause mortality risk through physical activity than men (Samitz et al., 2011). (See Figure 15.1 for a relationship between level of kilocalories and first heart attack in men.)

In summary, both women and men can improve their cardiovascular health and live longer with light-to-moderate exercise. Physically active people can expect an average increase in longevity of about two years (Blair et al., 2001). A cynic might note that a person would need to jog a total of about two years between the ages of 20 and 80 to increase longevity by two years. Why live another two years if one must spend that time exercising? However, physical activity does more than simply add quantity to a person's life span; it adds *quality* to those years as well, by improving well-being, mental health, and cognitive functioning (as we will discuss later in this chapter).

Physical Activity and Cholesterol Levels

How does exercise protect against CVD? One way is through increasing high-density lipoprotein (HDL, or "good" cholesterol) while decreasing LDL ("bad" cholesterol; Hausenloy & Yellen, 2008). The combination of raising HDL and lowering LDL may leave total cholesterol the same, but the ratio of total cholesterol to HDL becomes more favorable, and the risk for heart disease decreases. Thus, physical activity can benefit cardiac patients in two ways: by lowering LDL and by raising HDL (Szapary et al., 2003).

Moderate levels of exercise, with or without dietary changes, bring about a favorable ratio of total cholesterol to HDL. Reviews of studies from the Toronto symposium (Leon & Sanchez, 2001; Williams, 2001) generally found that moderate exercise, such as walking and gardening, increases HDL and less frequently, decreases both LDL and triglycerides. The combination of a low-fat diet and exercise is even more effective (Varady &

Jones, 2005), but either high level of HDL or high levels of physical fitness are protective (O'Donovan et al., 2017). Thus, moderate activity may lead to a more favorable ratio of total cholesterol to HDL, but prolonged strenuous physical activity does not seem to confer additional protection against heart disease (Leon & Sanchez, 2001). Furthermore, physical fitness confers protection, even without high levels of HDL.

If adults can improve their lipid numbers through moderate exercise, could children and adolescents also benefit from regular physical activity? Identifying the link between fitness and cardiovascular risk factors in children is difficult, as many children and adolescents who are sedentary are also overweight or obese. Despite this challenge, low fitness is related to high cholesterol levels and other cardiovascular risk factors for children in Europe (Andersen et al., 2008) and the United States (Eisenmann et al., 2007). Programs to improve these risk factors typically include both weight loss and exercise, yielding little research that evaluates only the influence of physical activity on cardiovascular risk factors (Kelley & Kelley, 2007).

In general, physically active children can benefit from exercise, but probably not as much as adults (Tolfrey, 2004). However, children as young as 4 can profit from an enhanced exercise program (Sääkslahti et al., 2004). This research looked at four-to-seven-year-old children and found that both girls and boys with highly active play time had low levels of total cholesterol, high levels of HDL cholesterol, and a favorable ratio between total cholesterol and HDL cholesterol. A study of pre-adolescent and early adolescent children showed results similar to studies with adults; that is, exercise seems to lower LDL while raising HDL and leaving total cholesterol basically unchanged (Tolfrey et al., 2000). Regular aerobic exercise may protect against heart disease in both adults and children by increasing HDL and by improving the ratio of total cholesterol to HDL.

IN SUMMARY

Accumulating evidence suggests that physical activity reduces the incidence of coronary heart disease. Early research had many flaws and tended to include only men. However, more recent research confirms a strong association between a regimen of moderate physical activity and cardiovascular health, including decreased risks of heart disease and stroke. In addition, physical activity can raise HDL, thereby improving the ratio of total cholesterol

to HDL. As a result, regular activity may add as much as two years to one's life while decreasing disability, especially in later years.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Construct a physical activity program designed to lower your risk for CVD, including the activities and durations for two weeks of the program.

15-4 Other Health Benefits of Physical Activity

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 15-6** Evaluate each of the other health benefits of physical activity, focusing on the impact of each on population health

Although most people who exercise do so for physical fitness, weight control, or cardiovascular health, other benefits accrue to those who adopt a physical activity regimen, including protection against some kinds of cancer, prevention of bone density loss, control of diabetes, and improved psychological health.

Protection Against Cancer

Several reviews (Miles, 2007; PAGAC, 2018) have examined the connection between physical activity and various cancers. Of the hundreds of studies evaluated, most focused on cancers of the bladder, colon and rectum, breast, endometrium, gastric, and renal system. Physical activity offers protection against each of these types of cancer, with the strong evidence for all, with a 10-to-20% risk reduction (PAGAC, 2018). The protective effects for colorectal cancer seem as strong for women as for men (Wolin et al., 2009), and exercise appears to protect postmenopausal more than premenopausal women from breast cancer (Friedenreich & Cust, 2008). Furthermore, exercise may be more likely to protect non-Caucasian women against breast cancer better than Caucasian women (Friedenreich & Cust, 2008). Evidence for a link between physical activity for lung and endometrial cancer is moderate (PAGAC, 2018). Results from a meta-analysis (Tardon et al., 2005) are

consistent with the systematic reviews, suggesting that moderate to high levels of physical activity reduce incidence of lung cancer in both women and men, but the relationship is stronger for women.

How does physical activity lower risk for cancer? Although the answer is unclear, physical activity may do so by influencing tumor initiation and growth (Rogers et al., 2008). Furthermore, physical activity affects proinflammatory cytokines, which are involved in the development of both CVD (Stewart et al., 2007) and cancer. Thus, research has not only established the protective benefits of physical activity for cancer but also has begun to show how those benefits may occur.

Exercise may also be helpful for people with cancer, including a longer life expectancy for cancer patients who are physically active (PAGAC, 2018). Cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy benefit from physical activity training by increasing strength, aerobic fitness, and weight (Quist et al., 2006). A systematic review (Speck et al., 2010) also indicates that exercise helps manage the fatigue that often accompanies cancer treatment. Thus, physical activity is effective in preventing several types of cancer and is helpful in managing some of the distressing side effects of cancer treatment.

Prevention of Bone Density Loss

Exercise also protects against **osteoporosis**, a disorder characterized by a reduction in bone density due to calcium loss that results in brittle bones. Physical activity can protect both men and women against loss of bone mineral density (BMD), especially those who were active during their youth. Bone minerals accrue during childhood and early adolescence, and activity during those years may be especially important for bone health (Hind & Burrows, 2007). For example, one comparison of retired athletes and a comparison group found that the former athletes retained more BMD and had fewer fractures at age 60 than those who had not been athletes.

Both men and women can benefit from high-impact exercise such as running and jumping. However, this type of exercise may leave people (especially older individuals) vulnerable to injuries. We discuss these and other injuries later in this chapter, but as the Would You Believe . . . ? box explains, both older and young people benefit from exercise. An experimental study (Vainionpää et al., 2005) indicated that young, premenopausal women in the experimental (high-impact) group had significantly higher BMD than young women in the control group. However,

an intervention featuring walking (Palombaro, 2005) and another using tai chi (Wayne et al., 2007) did not demonstrate effectiveness as clearly as the program with high-impact exercise (Zehnacker & Bemis-Dougherty, 2007).

Improved Sleep

Engaging in physical activity also improves several aspects of sleep (PAGAC, 2018). Sleep quality includes sleep onset length, waking during sleep, and length of sleep time. Those who exercise tend to experience quicker sleep onset, fewer wakings, shorter duration of waking periods, longer sleep periods, and more sleep time in deep sleep. These effects are stronger for adults than for children or adolescents, but young people also benefit. However, some of these benefits extend to those who have problems in sleeping, including insomnia and sleep apnea.

Type of exercise makes little difference to the benefits to sleep, and the timing of the exercise and sleep also shows no consistent relationship. As for most benefits from physical activity, the activity should be at least moderately strenuous to be most beneficial, but even occasional bouts of exercise can improve sleep. About 25% of the population of the United States reports problems in sleeping, which indicates the potential for improved quality of life for millions of people.

Control of Diabetes

Because obesity is a factor in type 2 diabetes and because exercise is an established means of controlling weight, it follows that physical activity may be a useful weapon in the control of diabetes. Systematic reviews of research on this topic confirm the benefits of exercise for improvement of insulin resistance (Plasqui & Westerterp, 2007), for prevention of type 2 diabetes (Jeon et al., 2007), for the management of this condition (Kavookjian et al., 2007), and for reduction in mortality risk among diabetics (Sluik et al., 2012). Thus, the benefits of exercise for type 2 diabetes are well established.

Does physical activity protect type 1 diabetics? A meta-analysis of behavior change interventions (Conn et al., 2008) showed that exercise is an important component in managing type 1 diabetes. Physically active adolescents with type 1 diabetes exhibited lower cardiovascular risk factors than those who were less active (Herbst et al., 2007). Although these studies reported a modest protective benefit for physical activity, they do not suggest that exercise is a panacea for the control of

diabetes; individuals with type 1 diabetes must manage many factors to lead healthy lives. (See Chapter 11 for a discussion of diabetes management.) Nevertheless, these findings indicate that physical activity can be a useful component in the treatment of insulin-dependent diabetes and can offer some protection against the development of non-insulin-dependent diabetes.

Psychological Benefits of Physical Activity

As stated earlier, physical activity increases not only the quantity of life but also its quality. The gains from regular physical activity extend to psychological benefits, including a defense against depression, a reduction of

Would You BELIEVE...?

It's Never Too Late—or Too Early

Physical activity is a healthy habit, but would you believe that it's never too late in the life span to start exercising? Or too early?

Older adults benefit from being physically active in many ways. Cardiovascular benefits include lower blood pressure, improved symptoms of congestive heart failure, and decreased risk for cardiovascular disease (PAGAC, 2018). In addition, physically active older adults have lower risk for diabetes, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, and depression. All of these benefits result in lowered sickness and death among physically active older adults (Everett et al, 2007).

Despite these many benefits, 56% of Americans over age 75 are sedentary (USCB, 2011), and only around 21% meet the recommended amount of physical activity (PAGAC, 2018). People tend to become less active as they age, and they also reduce their exercising when they experience pain (Nied & Franklin, 2002). For example, arthritis causes knee and hip joint pain that makes older people less willing to exercise. Also, people who have had a stroke may experience balance or weakness problems that make them feel uneasy about even normal levels of activity. Older people are more likely than younger ones to fall, and resulting broken bones may make a permanent change in their mobility and

independence. Although all these concerns have some foundation, the risks are manageable. Physical activity offers more benefits than risks for older people, even for those over age 85 and for those who are frail. They may need supervision for their exercise, but older adults benefit from physical activity. Exercise such as tai chi even helps quell fears and risks of falling (Sattin et al., 2005; Zijlstra et al., 2007). Almost all older people can decrease health risks and gain mobility from exercising.

It's also never too early to begin an active lifestyle. Physical activity furnishes lifetime benefits, and even young children benefit. Young children may not seem to be at any risk from inactivity, but they are. To maintain their goals of safety and convenience, parents and caregivers often confine infants in strollers, infant seats, or playpens that limit their movement (National Association for Sport and Physical Education [NASPE], 2002). These experiences not only limit mobility during infancy but also may delay developmental goals such as crawling and walking. Lack of physical activity during toddlerhood can lead to a sedentary childhood. Inactive children may also lag in developing motor skills and join the growing number of overweight and obese children in the United States,

which includes over 9% of young children, 17% of older children, and 20% of adolescents (Fryar et al., 2018).

The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE, 2002) proposed guidelines for physical activity, beginning during infancy. For all children, NASPE emphasized supervision and safety. The recommendations for infants included allowing them to experience settings in which they can move while maintaining safety and playing a variety of games such as peekaboo and hide-and-seek. NASPE recommended at least 30 minutes a day of structured physical activity for toddlers and 60 minutes for preschool children. Scott Roberts (2002) went a step further, recommending workouts for children. He argued that the prohibitions against weightlifting and other types of strength training for children have no research basis. On the contrary, Roberts maintained that children experience the same benefits from this type of exercise as do adults, including protection against cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and obesity as well as improved strength, flexibility, and posture.

Remember, physical activity brings lifetime benefits, so it's never too early—or too late—to begin a lifetime exercise program.

anxiety, a buffer against stress, and a contributor to better cognitive functioning (PAGAC, 2018). People who exercise regularly often say it improves their mood, reduces stress, and helps them focus. Does the evidence support these claims?

The link between physical activity and psychological functioning is less clearly established than the link between physical activity and some types of physiological health. In addition, any evaluation of the therapeutic effects of exercise on psychological disorders must consider the problems raised by the placebo effect. For this reason, quality research is difficult, but research has grown in the past decade, yielding evidence suggests that a regular exercise regimen can decrease depression, reduce anxiety, buffer stress, and improve cognitive functioning (PAGAC, 2018).

Decreased Depression The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition, of the American Psychiatric Association (APA, 2013) defines a major depressive episode as a period of at least two weeks during which there is either depressed mood or the loss of interest or pleasure in nearly all activities. During a lifetime, as many as 25% of women and 12% of men may suffer from major depression (APA, 2000). If physical activity can relieve major depression, then millions of people can benefit from a therapy that is easily available to nearly everyone.

People who exercise regularly are generally less depressed than sedentary people (Martinsen, 2005). When researchers compare groups of exercisers with groups of sedentary people on different measures of depression, they find that highly active people are usually less depressed. One possible explanation is that, rather than improved mood, exercising may be restricted to healthy people. Depressed people may simply be less motivated to exercise.

Experimental studies aim to determine the direction of causation. For example, one randomized controlled trial (Annesi, 2005) divided moderately depressed individuals into an experimental group that performed 10 weeks of moderate physical activity three times a week for 20 to 30 minutes and a control group that did not exercise. Clear differences emerged between the two groups, with those who exercised experiencing much lower levels of depression than participants in the control group. Furthermore, a similar research design (Dunn et al., 2005) found evidence for a dose–response relationship between physical activity and relief from depressive symptomatology. Recent

reviews of research confirm that physical activity does reduce symptoms of depression (Silveira et al., 2013; PAGAC, 2018), although well-controlled studies tend to show less of a benefit than more poorly designed studies (Cooney et al., 2013).

Exercise is certainly more effective than no treatment and may be comparable to cognitive therapy (Donaghy, 2007) or antidepressant medication (Daley, 2008). The long-term effects of physical activity on depression, however, have not been substantiated. Nevertheless, an evaluation of the significance of exercise programs found a strong effect for exercise in preventing and reducing depression symptoms in those with depression (PAGAC, 2018). The effects of exercise show not only statistically significant differences but also clinically significant effects (Rethorst et al., 2007). Thus, the body of research supports an early statement by Rod Dishman (2003), who explained: “I am not proposing that exercise is a replacement for psychotherapy or drug therapy, but these findings about exercise are not trivial and suggest that physical activity may be an important addition or complement to standard treatment for mild depression” (p. 45).

Reduced Anxiety Many people report that they exercise to feel more relaxed and less anxious. Does exercise play a role in anxiety reduction? The answer may depend on the type of anxiety under study. **Trait anxiety** is a general personality characteristic or trait that manifests itself as a constant feeling of dread or uneasiness. **State anxiety** is a temporary, affective condition that stems from a specific situation. Feelings of worry or concern over a final examination or a job interview are examples of state anxiety. Physiological changes such as increased perspiration and heart rate typically accompany this type of anxiety.

Research on the effects of physical activity on state anxiety suffers from many challenges, but a number of studies allowed an evaluation of overall effects (PAGAC, 2018). Results indicated that, when compared to a control group, those assigned to the exercise condition showed significant reductions in anxiety. Furthermore, physical activity is also effective in reducing anxiety symptoms among chronic illness patients (Herring et al., 2010).

How does physical activity reduce anxiety? One hypothesis is that exercise simply provides a change of pace—a chance to relax and forget one’s troubles. In support of this change-of-pace hypothesis, exercise demonstrated no stronger therapeutic effect than

meditation (Bahrke & Morgan, 1978). Studies show that other techniques to reduce anxiety, including biofeedback, transcendental meditation, “time-out” therapy, and even beer drinking in a pub atmosphere, can also be effective (Morgan, 1981). Each of these interventions provides a change of pace, and all are associated with reduced levels of state anxiety.

Another hypothesis involves changes in brain chemistry. Studies with rats (Greenwood et al., 2005) show that exercise changes the transport of the neurotransmitter serotonin, which is related to positive mood. Studies with humans (Broocks et al., 2003) also suggest that changes occur in the metabolism of this neurotransmitter after exercise. Thus, physical activity may reduce anxiety by providing a change of pace, by altering neurotransmitter activity, or through some combination of the two.

Buffer Against Stress Two questions arise in relation to exercise and stress: (1) Can exercise enhance psychological well-being? (2) Can it protect people against the harmful effects of stress? Research on the first question has generally produced an affirmative answer (PAGAC, 2018). For example, older adults who exercise more regularly report greater well-being as well as greater quality of life than older adults who do not (Paxton et al., 2010). Furthermore, a meta-analysis (Netz et al., 2005) finds that physical activity relates to psychological well-being, but longer exercise duration does not always lead to continuing increases in feelings of well-being. Thus, moderate exercise may be enough to boost well-being.

Answers to the second question are more difficult because a direct causal link between stress and subsequent physical illness has not yet been established (see Chapter 6 on stress and disease). However, several studies suggest that physical activity helps people deal with stress. Fitness appears to act as a buffer for both physical and psychological stress (Ensel & Lin, 2004); individuals who are more fit experience less distress.

Why might fitness reduce feelings of stress? One pathway may involve cardiovascular responses to stress, as exercise moderates the increase in blood pressure that accompanies psychological stress (Hamer et al., 2006). A second pathway may involve immune responses, as the effect of stress on the release of proinflammatory cytokines is moderated in fit individuals (Hamer & Steptoe, 2007). Thus, exercise acts to decrease stress, on both a psychological and a physiological level.

The duration of exercise required to produce positive effects is not extreme; as little as 10 minutes of

moderately strenuous exercise is capable of elevating mood (Hansen, Stevens, & Coast, 2001). The results of the studies on stress buffering do not indicate a strong effect for exercise, but physical activity is a strategy that many people use to help them manage stress. **Figure 15.2** shows some of the positive effects of exercise.

Better Cognitive Functioning Physical activity may make you feel better, but can it also make you think better? Earlier we said (mischievously, perhaps) that you could extend your life by two years by spending two years exercising. However, time spent in physical activity could be more worthwhile when considering the rewards that it brings to cognitive functioning. One recent study of nearly 1,000 older adults showed that those who engaged in high amounts of physical activity had, at a five-year follow-up, cognitive skills characteristic of individuals *10 years younger* compared to those who engaged in little to no physical activity (Willey et al., 2016). Thus, while more research is needed to confirm these findings, they do suggest that physical activity could make one’s living years *smarter*, not just more numerous.

Cognitive functioning includes diverse abilities such as the ability to focus attention, the speed of processing new information, and memory. Cognitive functioning also includes executive functioning, which refers to the ability to plan for and successfully pursue goals. The evidence is moderately strong that moderate-to-vigorous physical activity has a positive influence on all of these functions (PAGAC, 2018).

Aging often brings about a decline in cognitive functioning. Consequently, the research that focuses on the link between physical activity and cognitive functioning in older adults is especially important. A review of 29 exercise intervention studies (Smith, Blumenthal, et al., 2010) concluded that adults who participate in regular physical activity programs show greater attention, processing speed, memory, and executive functioning than adults who do not participate in physical activity programs. A systematic review (PAGAC, 2018) indicated strong evidence that higher levels of physical activity protect against some of the cognitive declines that occur with aging. For example, physical activity interventions show a stronger protective effect on memory among older adults than among younger adults, as well as among adults who are at greatest risk for Alzheimer’s disease. Aerobic fitness training also contributes to increases in brain volume among older adults, but not younger adults (Colcombe et al., 2006).

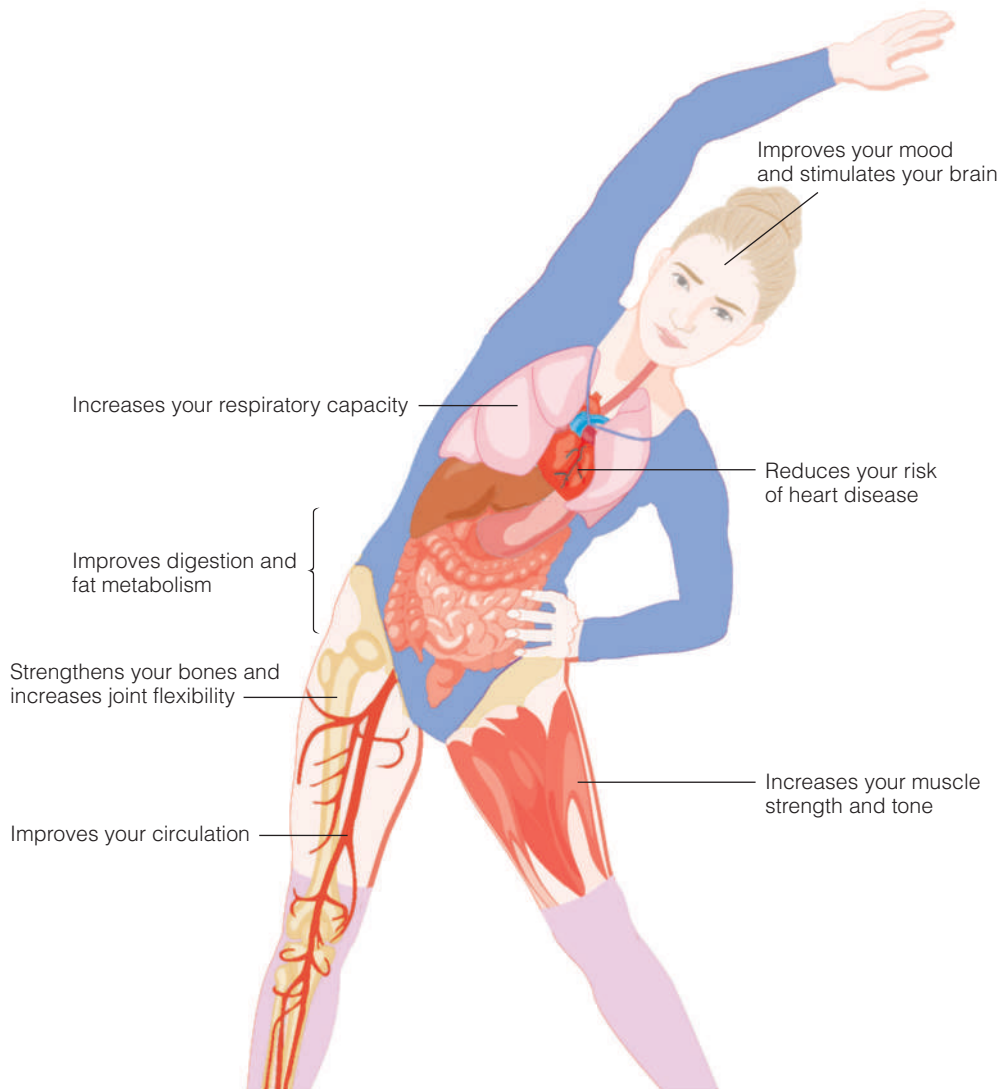


FIGURE 15.2 Some of the physical and psychological benefits of exercise.

Source: *An invitation to health* (7th ed., p. 493), by D. Hales, 1997, Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole. Copyright © 1997 by Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

One Australian study focused on older adults who reported memory problems that were indicative of risk for Alzheimer’s disease (Lautenschlager et al., 2008). Through random assignment, some of these adults participated in a six-month, home-based physical activity intervention; other adults did not. At an 18-month follow-up, the adults assigned to the intervention *improved* in their cognitive functioning. In contrast, those who did not receive the physical activity intervention showed no change in cognitive functioning.

Can physical activity also improve cognitive function in children? A systematic analysis of studies (PAGAC, 2018) suggests it can. Children who are physically fit show better memory performance than those who are less fit. In addition, these participants had greater volume of the hippocampus, which plays an important role in memory (Chaddock et al., 2010). Intervention research also shows this link between physical activity and cognitive functioning. For example, a three-month physical activity intervention

program for overweight and sedentary children led to greater planning abilities as well as greater performance on a standardized math test (Davis et al., 2011).

Why does physical activity improve cognitive functioning? While the exact reason remains unknown, researchers speculate that these benefits may derive from increased cerebral blood flow or increased expression of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), a protein that contributes the growth and differentiation of neurons in the brain (Brown et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2010).

IN SUMMARY

During the past 50 years, research supports the hypothesis that physical activity improves health and psychological functioning. Regular moderate physical activity can reduce the incidence of CVD, including heart disease and stroke. Exercise

improves both blood pressure and cholesterol profile, showing some ability to raise HDL. Physical activity also shows benefits for decreasing the risk for the development of diabetes and several types of cancer, including colon and breast cancer. Exercise can also promote bone growth in young people and slow the loss of bone minerals in older individuals. Moreover, physical activity shows psychological benefits. Indeed, exercise may be a useful intervention for depression. Benefits also appear for reducing anxiety, buffering stress, improving sleep, and improving cognitive functioning.

An earlier section of this chapter examined several reasons why people exercise. **Table 15.1** lists some of these reasons, summarizes research evidence, and cites at least one study pertaining to each reason.

Would You BELIEVE...?

Exercise Can Help You Learn

What plays in the earplugs of people you see working out? Perhaps it's an inspiring "power song," perhaps a podcast, or maybe even a recording of a TV show. Would it seem strange if you learned that a person was listening to a class lecture while running, or a foreign language lesson while riding a bike?

Physical activity can improve cognitive functioning, and new research is examining whether physical activity can help people learn new information.

Researchers from Germany (Schmidt-Kassow et al., 2013) asked young adult women to learn new vocabulary terms under one of three conditions. In one condition, the women learned the words while resting in a comfortable chair. In another condition, the women learned the words immediately after riding a stationary bicycle for 30 minutes. In the third condition, the women learned the words *while* riding the

stationary bicycle. For those who rode the bike, the researchers ensured that the women's exertion was of a light-to-moderate intensity. All women then completed a test to assess how many of the new vocabulary terms they could remember correctly.

The major difference that the researchers found was that the women who were exposed to the new words *while* riding the bike had significantly better memory of the words than those who were exposed to the words while relaxing. Interestingly, this difference was largest for those women who were initially identified as poor vocabulary learners. These findings suggest that for some kinds of learning tasks, exposure to the information *while* engaging in low-to-moderate intensity activity could improve learning.

Another study examined whether physical activity *following* a learning task could improve memory

(van Dongen et al., 2016). In this study, all participants saw a set of pictures and locations then participated in one of three conditions: no aerobic exercise, aerobic exercise immediately following the learning task, and aerobic exercise four hours following the learning task. The researchers found superior memory for the picture-location associations among those who exercised four hours after the learning task.

While the exact biological mechanisms for these findings remain unclear, they do suggest that light-to-moderate physical activity can promote learning of new information. So, if you have new information to learn and you also want to do some light-to-moderate exercise, you could use physical activity to your advantage: listen to the class lecture or lesson while exercising, or make sure you follow up your studying with an exercise session.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Evaluate the other health benefits of physical activity during three time frames: first according to which of the benefits is most important to you currently; the next, which will be most important in 20 years; then again considering your age in 40 years.

15-5 Hazards of Physical Activity

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 15-7 Contrast the symptoms of exercise addiction with symptoms of drug addiction
- 15-8 Describe the conditions that increase the likelihood for injury during exercise and give an example of how to minimize each of these risks

Although physical activity can enhance physical functioning, reduce anxiety, stress, and depression, and improve cognitive functioning, it also poses hazards to one's physical and psychological health. Some athletes overtrain to the point of staleness and, consequently, suffer from negative mood, fatigue, and depression (Tobar, 2005). In addition, some highly active people suffer from exercise-related injuries. Other people allow exercise to assume an almost addictive importance in their lives. In this section, we look at some of these potential hazards related to physical activity. However, people should understand that the benefits of physical activity outweigh the risks (PAGAC, 2018).

Exercise Addiction

Some people become so involved with exercise that they ignore injuries to continue exercising or allow their exercise regimen to interfere with other parts of their lives such as work or family responsibilities. Others may think these people have an *exercise addiction*, but their behavior may not match the description

TABLE 15.1 Reasons for Exercising and Research Supporting These Reasons

Reasons for Exercising	Findings	Principal Source(s)
Weight control	Obesity can be reduced through exercise; 60 to 90 minutes a day may be necessary.	Hill & Wyatt, 2005; Jakicic & Otto, 2005; Wu et al., 2009
	Exercise is as effective as dieting; sculpting the perfect body won't work.	Blair & Church, 2004; Wood et al., 1988
	Light-to-moderate exercise provides sufficient protection.	Barengo et al., 2004; Paffenbarger et al., 1978
Heart disease and aerobic fitness	Both physical fitness and physical activity have a dose–response relationship with aerobic health.	Blair et al., 2001
	Walking confers benefits for older people.	Murphy et al., 2007
	Active women reduce risk of stroke.	Hu et al., 2000
Stroke	Inactive people are more likely to have strokes.	Krarup et al., 2007
	Physical activity can reduce two types of stroke.	Wendel-Vos et al., 2004
	Nurses' Health Study reviewed 37 prospective cohort studies.	Oguma et al., 2002
All-cause mortality	Dose–response relationship between vigorous physical activity and mortality risk	Samitz et al., 2011

TABLE 15.1 Reasons for Exercising and Research Supporting These Reasons (Continued)

Reasons for Exercising	Findings	Principal Source(s)
	Largest reduction in mortality risk when comparing no physical activity to some physical activity	PAGAC, 2018; Woodcock et al., 2011
Cholesterol level	Exercise increases HDL and decreases LDL.	Hausenloy & Yellen, 2008; Szapary et al., 2003
	Exercise reduces LDL and triglycerides.	Leon & Sanchez, 2001
	Low fitness is related to high cholesterol in children and adolescents.	Andersen et al., 2008; Eisenmann et al., 2007
	Exercise relates to low cholesterol in children.	Sääkslahti et al., 2004; Tolfrey, 2004; Tolfrey et al., 2000
Cancer	Meta-analyses show inverse relationship between exercise and cancer of various sites.	Miles, 2007; PAGAC, 2018; Thune & Furberg, 2001
	Exercise reduces risk for lung cancer, with a stronger relationship for women.	Tardon et al., 2005
	Exercise may protect against both tumor initiation and growth.	Rogers et al., 2008
	Physical activity helps people with cancer manage the effects of cancer treatment.	PAGAC, 2018; Quist et al., 2006; Speck et al., 2010
Bone density loss (osteoporosis)	Exercise helps build bone mass in children and adolescents.	Hind & Burrows, 2007
	Retired male athletes retain much of bone mineral density.	Nordström et al., 2005
	High-impact activity can delay loss of bone minerals in women.	Vainionpää et al., 2005
	Low-impact activities are not as effective as high-impact exercise.	Palombaro, 2005; Wayne et al., 2007; Zehnacker et al., 2007
Sleep	Exercise improves sleep onset, sleep length, fewer wakings during sleep period, and more time in deep sleep	PAGAC, 2018
	Exercise can benefit those with insomnia and sleep apnea	PAGAC, 2018
Diabetes	Exercise improves insulin resistance.	Plasqui & Westerterp, 2007
	Exercise lowers risk for type 2 diabetes.	Jeon et al., 2007
	Exercise can help in managing type 2 diabetes.	Kavookjian et al., 2007
	Exercise is an important component in managing type 1 diabetes.	Conn et al., 2008
	Exercise lowers risk for CVD in individuals with type 1 diabetes.	Herbst et al., 2007
	Exercise lowers mortality risk in diabetics.	Sluik et al., 2012

TABLE 15.1 Reasons for Exercising and Research Supporting These Reasons (Continued)

Reasons for Exercising	Findings	Principal Source(s)
Decreased depression	Moderate exercise three times a week for 20 to 30 minutes reduces depression.	Annesi, 2005; PAGAC, 2018; Silveira et al., 2013
	A dose–response relationship occurs with exercise and depression.	Dunn et al., 2005
	Exercise compares with cognitive therapy and antidepressant medication in effectiveness.	Daley, 2008; Donaghy, 2007
	Benefits of exercise are clinically significant.	Rethorst et al., 2007
Reduced anxiety	Moderate exercise can reduce state anxiety.	PAGAC, 2018
	Physical activity is effective in reducing anxiety among chronic illness patients.	Herring et al., 2010
Buffer against stress	Exercise enhances mood, feelings of well-being, and quality of life.	Ensel & Lin, 2004; Hansen et al., 2001; Paxton et al., 2010
	Exercise increases well-being, but more is not always better.	Netz et al., 2005
	Exercise affects blood pressure and immune system response to stress.	Hamer et al., 2006; Hamer & Steptoe, 2007
Better cognitive functioning	Exercise is linked to greater attention, processing speed, memory, and executive functioning in adults.	PAGAC, 2018; Smith et al., 2010
	Aerobic fitness training is linked to increases in brain volume among older adults.	Colcombe et al., 2006
	Very physically active older adults have cognitive skills far superior to inactive older adults.	Wiley et al., 2016
	Six-month exercise program led to improved cognitive functioning.	Lautenschlager et al., 2008
	Children who exercise more show better memory, planning, and math performance.	Chaddock et al., 2010; Davis et al., 2011

of an addiction. In Chapter 13, we saw that addictions produce tolerance, dependence, and withdrawal symptoms.

William Morgan (1979) compared the process of excessive exercising to the development of other addictions. Initially, the tolerance for running is low, and it has many unpleasant side effects. But persistence eases the unpleasant aspects, and the pleasure of meeting goals becomes a powerful reinforcer. Like most social drinkers who have a casual, nonobsessive relationship with alcohol, most exercisers can incorporate physical activity into their lives without drastic changes in lifestyle. Other exercisers, however, cannot. Those who continue to increase their exercise must make changes

in their lives to accommodate the time required, with consequences for other responsibilities and activities.

A high level of commitment to exercise is not the same as addiction (Terry, Szabo, & Griffiths, 2004). Some people’s exercise habits reflect a high degree of commitment, whereas others fit the description of dependence, showing a strong emotional attachment to exercise (Ackard et al., 2002) and exhibiting withdrawal symptoms such as depression and anxiety when prevented from exercising (Hausenblas & Symons Downs, 2002a, 2002b). Committed exercisers tend to have rational reasons for their exercise behavior such as extrinsic rewards, whereas addicted exercisers tend to use exercise to manage negative emotions and

problems in their lives (Warner & Griffiths, 2006). This type of research opens the possibility that exercise may be analogous to other types of addiction (Hamer & Karageorghis, 2007; Hausenblaus & Smoliga, 2017). This contention remains controversial, however, and some authorities prefer the term *obligatory exercise* or *exercise dependence* rather than exercise addiction.

Obligatory exercisers share several characteristics with people with eating disorders, especially those with anorexia. For example, they continue their chosen activity even when they are injured, continuing behavior that is harmful and even self-destructive. They also show a progressive self-absorption, with a great deal of concentration on internal experiences. In addition, many people who have anorexia experience a compulsion to exercise excessively (Klein et al., 2004). This observation prompted the proposal that teenage female anorexics and addicted male runners are analogous (Davis & Scott-Robertson, 2000); both show the need for mastery of the body, unusually high expectations of self, tolerance, or denial of physical discomfort and pain, and a single-minded commitment to endurance. Other researchers (Ackard et al., 2002; Freire et al., 2020) found that obligatory exercisers exhibited body obsession, were more likely to have eating disorders, and showed symptoms of other psychological problems. The motivation for excessive exercise is a critical mediating factor that connects exercise to eating disorders (Cook & Hausenblas, 2008). For these individuals, the connection between exercising and eating disorders is a strong emotional attachment to exercise. These individuals experience injuries yet continue to exercise, neglect their personal relationships, and shortchange their jobs to devote time to exercise. Perhaps this fanaticism can be best expressed in the words of one obligatory runner:

One day last spring I was having an exceptionally good run. I was running about 10 miles a day at that time and on this particular day I had decided to extend my workout. I was around the 14-mile point and I was preparing to cross a one-lane bridge when all of a sudden a large cement mixer turned the corner and began to cross the bridge. I never thought for a second about stopping and letting the truck pass. I simply continued and said to myself, “Come on you son-of-a-bitch and I’ll split you right down the middle—there will be concrete all over the road!” The driver slammed on the brakes and swerved to the side as I sailed by. That was really scary afterward, but at the time I really felt good. I have felt equally

strong and indestructible many times since, but never have taken on a cement truck again. (Morgan, 1979, pp. 63, 67)

Injuries from Physical Activity

Excluding head-to-head challenges with cement trucks, what are the chances of experiencing injuries from exercise? Many people with a regular exercise program accept minor injuries and soreness as an almost inevitable component of their program. However, irregular exercise produces even more injuries and more discomfort, with “weekend athletes” accounting for a disproportional number of injuries.

Musculoskeletal injuries are common, and the greater the frequency and intensity of exercise, the more likely it is that people will injure themselves (Powell et al., 2011). The Surgeon General’s report (USDHHS, 1996) found that about half of runners had experienced an injury during the past year. This review also found, as expected, that the injury rate was lower for walkers than for joggers and that previous injury is a risk factor for subsequent injury. Physical activity is the source of 83% of all musculoskeletal injuries, and at least one-fourth of exercisers must interrupt their regimen because of such injuries (Hootman et al., 2002). The decision to decrease exercise in response to injury is a wise one; “working through the pain” is an exercise myth that is associated with further injury.

Besides muscular and skeletal injuries, avid exercisers encounter several other health hazards. Heat, cold, dogs, and drivers can all be sources of danger. During exercise, body temperature rises. Both heat and cold present problems, some of which can be dangerous (Roberts, 2007). Fluid intake before, after, and even during exercise can protect against overheating by allowing cooling through sweating. However, conditions of extremely high air temperature, high humidity, and sunlight can combine to raise body temperature and prevent sweat from evaporating from the skin surface. If the body cannot cool itself, dangerous overheating may occur. Managing the risks for heat stress is a challenge for those who manage sports teams (Cleary, 2007).

Cold temperatures can also be dangerous for outdoor exercising (Roberts, 2007), but proper clothing can provide protection. Layered clothing for the body and gloves, hat, and even a face mask can protect against temperatures of 20°F and below (Pollock et al.,



Syda Productions/Shutterstock.com

Wearing appropriate clothing decreases the risks of injury during exercise.

1978). Temperatures below zero, especially when combined with wind, can be dangerous even to people who are not exercising.

Death During Exercise

Many patients who have had a heart attack go into cardiac rehabilitation programs that include an exercise program, which generally includes close supervision. Although these coronary patients are at elevated risk during exercise, the cardiovascular benefit they gain from exercising ordinarily outweighs the risk (USDHHS, 1996). Nevertheless, individuals diagnosed with coronary heart disease should undertake exercise only with a physician's permission and under the supervision of specialists in cardiac rehabilitation.

What about people who have no known disease? Is it possible for a person who looks and feels well to die unexpectedly during exercise? Yes—but it is also possible to die unexpectedly while watching TV or sleeping. However, exercise increases the risk of such sudden death (Lippi et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2007). A 12-year follow-up analysis of male physicians (Albert et al., 2000) showed that sudden death was more than 16 times more likely during or immediately after vigorous physical exertion than during other times. However, the risk was very low for any specific episode of exercise—one death per 1.5 million episodes of exercise. This study also showed that the benefits of exercise outweighed the risks: Men who exercised regularly were less likely to die during exercise than those who were unaccustomed to exertion. Although the men in this follow-up study (Albert et al., 2000) did not identify

themselves as having CVD when the study began, either they were affected without their knowledge or developed this disease during the 12 years of the study. Indeed, most sudden deaths during exercise are the result of some type of heart disease, but people may be unaware of their risks.

Under most circumstances, exercise shows benefits for the cardiovascular system, but those with CVD or other heart problems experience increased risks. Even for those who have exercised heavily for years of their lives (Raum et al., 2007), there are risks. Even seemingly healthy, young people may be vulnerable to sudden cardiac death during exercise (Lippi et al., 2018). Professional basketball player Reggie Lewis, who died during a practice game at the age of 28 due to a previously undiagnosed heart condition, is one of many young athletes who have died during or shortly after periods of exercise. In children, adolescents, and young adults, the cause of sudden cardiac death is most often congenital heart abnormalities or arrhythmias (abnormal heartbeat patterns). Among adults, about 60% of sudden cardiac deaths are due to blood clots that precipitate heart attacks, the typical case of the most frequent cause of death in the United States. Thus, most sudden deaths during exercise are those of individuals who had underlying cardiovascular problems, whether they knew it or not.

Reducing Exercise Injuries

Adequate caution can decrease the probability of injury. One precaution is to receive screening for CVD before beginning even a moderately strenuous program of physical activity (Lippi et al., 2018). For people who

have or are at risk for CVD, supervised training is a wise precaution, especially when initiating an exercise program. Others, such as people who have been sedentary for a long time, may also benefit from supervision or training and should undergo screening. With the guidance of a trainer, people will be less likely to attempt exercise that is inappropriate for their fitness level or to continue to exercise for too long or too strenuously as they start a program. Sedentary individuals who begin to be active with vigorous exercise are at higher risk for injury and sudden death than those who build up to intense exercise. In addition, examination by a health care professional and consultation with an exercise professional will provide health status information and teach proper warm-up and stretching routines that are important in preventing injuries (Cooper, 2001).

Regardless of the level of fitness, the use of appropriate equipment decreases injuries. For example, proper running shoes are a necessity for running, jogging, or even exercise walking (Cooper, 2001). The correct type and amount of clothing are also important, either to allow for cooling or to retain heat. In addition to dressing properly for heat or cold, exercisers need to recognize the symptoms of heat stress. These include dizziness, weakness, nausea, muscle cramps, and headache. Each of these symptoms is a signal to stop exercising.

IN SUMMARY

Exercise has hazards as well as benefits. Potential hazards include exercise addiction—that is, a compulsive need to devote long periods of time to strenuous physical activity. Also, exercise may lead to injuries, the majority of which are musculoskeletal and relatively minor. Exercisers should avoid working out in extreme temperatures, and they should know how to avoid dogs, drivers, and darkness.

Death during exercise is a possibility. Those most vulnerable are individuals with CVD, who are often older, but young people with heart abnormalities are also at risk. Nevertheless, people who exercise regularly are much less likely than sporadic exercisers to die of a heart attack during intense physical exertion. Exercise-related injuries can be reduced by screening by a health care professional for preexisting conditions, preparation such as choosing the appropriate level of exercise, using appropriate equipment, and recognizing signs of trouble and reacting quickly.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Rank the risks that accompany physical activities that you perform. (Note: If you do not participate in regular physical activity, that behavior is also a risk.)

15-6 How Much Is Enough but Not Too Much?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 15-9** Describe what factors are important in answering the question about appropriate levels of physical activity for health benefits

How much physical activity is enough but not too much? Table 15.2 lists the current physical activity recommendations, by age group. In recent years, estimates have decreased for the amount of exercise that produces health benefits. In 2018, the American College of Sports Medicine presented new recommendations for the amount and type of activity for health benefits (USDHHS, 2018). These recommendations expanded on earlier recommendations, taking new research into account. According to this official view, a healthy adult under age 65 should participate in at least 30 minutes of moderately vigorous activity five times a week or vigorous activity 20 minutes three times a week. In addition, people should engage in strength training exercises of at least moderate intensity at least twice a week. These experts described this level of exercise as adequate to protect against chronic disease, including CVD. Longer periods of activity accrue greater protection.

The moderately vigorous activity recommendations reflect the evidence that even less than intense exercise produces health benefits, and that vigorous exercise is not necessary. For example, a program of walking decreased cardiovascular risk factors in previously sedentary individuals (Murphy et al., 2007). Indeed, moderate exercise may be superior to more intense activity for some cardiovascular risk factors (Johnson et al., 2007). However, moderately vigorous activity three times a week will not prompt weight loss or maintain weight loss; those goals require more lengthy and more intense exercise, as

TABLE 15.2 Current Physical Activity Recommendations

Age Group	Recommendation
Pre-school children (aged 3-5)	Should be active throughout the day to help their development
Children and adolescents (aged 6–17)	One hour of aerobic physical activity every day; most of this activity should be of moderate-to-vigorous intensity. Muscle-strengthening and bone-strengthening activity on at least three days per week.
Adults (aged 18–64)	2.5 hours of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week, or 1.25 hours of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity per week. Muscle-strengthening activities on at least two days per week.
Older adults (aged 65 and older)	Same recommendations as for adults, or as much as abilities allow. In addition, exercise that maintains or improves balance is recommended.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS).(2018). *Physical activity guidelines for Americans* (2nd ed.), Washington, DC: Author.

Rickey Gervais discovered. Therefore, how much is enough depends on the health goals and on the person’s choice of activity, plus other personal and health considerations. Ideally, an exercise professional could factor in the relevant information and construct an exercise “prescription” tailored to each individual (Maslov et al., 2018).

APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

1. Apply the fitness standards from the American College of Sports Medicine to determine if your level of physical activity fulfills these goals.



Walking is one form of physical activity that offers more advantages than hazards for most people.

15-7 Improving Adherence to Physical Activity

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

15-10 Evaluate the effectiveness of informational, behavioral, social, technology-based, and environmental engineering interventions for improving adherence to exercise regimens

Adherence to nearly all medical and health regimens is a serious problem (see Chapter 4), and exercise is no exception. Only about 26% of men, 19% of women,

and 20% of adolescents in the United States get regular physical activity at either a moderate or vigorous intensity (USDHHS, 2018); the percentage is similar in the European Union (Sjöström et al., 2006). For individuals who participate in prescribed exercise regimens, the dropout rates closely parallel the relapse rates reported in smoking and alcohol cessation programs.

Everybody could use some extra motivation to get up off the couch and exercise. For some people, a membership at a health club, a personal trainer, or an opportunity to be a contestant on *The Biggest Loser* provides the motivation. Unfortunately, with so much of the population being sedentary, interventions are needed that do not require such costly face-to-face contact with a fitness professional. Thus, interventions that aim to



BECOMING HEALTHIER

1. If you don't exercise, understand that a great deal of evidence shows risks for sedentary behavior and benefits for physical activity.

Action plan: Make a specific plan to start a program of regular physical activity, including an activity that is convenient for you and that you feel capable of performing (and even enjoying).

2. Take steps to undertake your program safely.

Action Plan: Get a check-up to confirm that you do not have CVD. If you are overweight and over 40, this step is even more important.

3. Don't start too fast. People who begin with an intense exercise program are more likely to quit and more likely to sustain an injury.

Action Plan: Once you have determined that you are ready to

begin an exercise program, start slowly. The first day you may feel as though you can run a mile. Don't give in to that temptation.

4. Develop realistic expectations of your program. Fitness or weight loss does not typically occur quickly.

Action Plan: If you are exercising for weight control, don't weigh yourself every day, and try not to become preoccupied with your weight or body shape.

5. If you are in the process of quitting smoking, use exercise to prevent weight gain.

Action Plan: Formulate a plan to do some type of physical activity each time you feel the urge to light up.

6. Understand that social support helps people stick to their exercise regimens.

Action Plan: Enlist a friend to exercise with you or join a team or group exercise program.

7. Stay safe when you exercise outdoors.

Action Plan: If you jog or cycle in a location unfamiliar to you, check out your surroundings before you begin. Dogs, ditches, and dangerous detours may be in your path.

8. Understand that no one type of exercise will fulfill fitness goals.

Action Plan: To acquire muscle tone as well as aerobic fitness, include a combination of types of exercise such as working out with weights or other isotonic exercise as well as aerobics. Explore the types of exercise that build flexibility and balance to complete your all the components of fitness.

improve physical activity often rely on other methods and channels, such as the computers and the Internet, telephone, mass media, and changes to the environment. In this section, we review some of these interventions and describe their effectiveness. As you will learn, one of the challenges in improving adherence to physical activity is maintaining the activity over time. Furthermore, you will learn that even some of the simplest interventions can have surprising effects.

Informational Interventions Informational interventions seek to raise public awareness of the importance of physical activity and its benefits, as well as highlight opportunities to engage in exercise. These informational interventions take a variety of forms, ranging from mass media campaigns to “point-of-decision” prompts.

Mass media campaigns use widespread media channels such as television and radio commercials,

newspaper and magazine advertisements, billboards, and bus wraps to inform people about the importance of physical activity. A review of 18 mass media interventions—implemented in a variety of countries, including the United States, New Zealand, Australian, Canada, Columbia, and Brazil—found that these mass media campaigns are generally successful at raising awareness, as measured by people's ability to recall information from the campaign (Leavy et al., 2011).

Does this awareness translate into increases in physical activity? The evidence regarding this question is mixed. Although some of these mass media campaigns led to greater levels of self-reported physical activity, other interventions did not. Furthermore, there is little evidence that any mass media campaign has effects on physical activity that persist long after a campaign ends (Leavy et al., 2011). Thus, the effectiveness of mass

media campaigns on adoption of physical activity remains unclear.

Informational interventions can occur in simpler and less expensive forms, such as through “point-of-decision” prompts. When you need to get to a higher floor in a building, do you take the elevator, or do you take the stairs? This is a choice that many people make on an everyday basis, and taking the stairs is an opportunity to inject physical activity into an otherwise sedentary day. Yet, most people choose the elevator. Dozens of studies show that signs placed near stairs—whether they be in the workplace, shopping malls, or subway exits—motivate people to make the physically active choice. In fact, reviews of research on these point-of-decision prompts show that they increase stair use by approximately 50% (Nocon et al., 2010; Soler et al., 2010). Furthermore, people who are obese are more likely than normal-weight individuals to respond to these signs by taking the stairs (Webb & Cheng, 2010).

These point-of-decision prompts may also be cost effective. One team of British researchers (Olander & Eves, 2011) compared the effects of two interventions aimed at increasing stair use on a university campus. One intervention, called “Workplace Wellbeing Day,” placed research staff at an information booth in the center of campus at midday, where informational leaflets were handed out to over 1,000 people. The other intervention simply had point-of-decision signs strategically placed between the elevators and the stairs of several buildings. How much did these interventions cost? The “Workplace Wellbeing Day” cost almost \$800 to implement and had no effect on stair use. In contrast, the point-of-decision signs cost merely \$30 to implement and significantly increased stair use. Thus, informational interventions can work, particularly when people are exposed to the information at the point of decision (Wakefield et al., 2010). However, informational interventions seek to raise awareness or generate positive attitudes toward physical activity. These are only the first steps toward maintaining an activity regimen; changing behavior patterns is much more difficult.

Behavioral and Social Interventions Behavioral interventions attempt to teach people the skills necessary for adoption and maintenance of physical activity. Social interventions aim to create a social environment that makes adoption and maintenance of physical activity more successful. These types of interventions range from school-based physical education

programs to interventions designed to increase social support, to individually tailored health behavior change programs.

School-based physical education programs are often a mix of structured physical activity and education about the benefits of regular exercise. There is strong evidence that school-based physical activity programs increase the amount of time that students spend in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, and this increased activity often leads to improvements in aerobic fitness (Kahn et al., 2002). However, these benefits are largely due to the physical activity incorporated directly into these programs, rather than the educational aspect. For example, classroom-based educational programs that focus on reducing sedentary behaviors—such as watching television and playing video games—do not reliably increase physical activity (Kahn et al., 2002). Furthermore, school-based physical education programs are less effective at increasing physical activity outside of school hours than they are at increasing physical activity during school hours (Cale & Harris, 2006). Thus, school-based physical education programs are moderately successful at increasing students’ physical activity but do not appear to teach skills that enable students to increase physical activity on their own time.

Social support interventions focus on changing physical activity by building and maintaining social relationships that can facilitate behavior change. Examples of these interventions include developing a “buddy system,” making a contract with another person to exercise for a specific period of time, or participating in a group exercise program. A systematic review of social support (Scarapinchia et al., 2017) concluded that there is a positive effect. Social support interventions generally increase the amount of time spent in physical activity, increase the frequency of exercise, and lead to improvements in aerobic fitness and decreases in body fat (Kahn et al., 2002). Thus, the power of social support is clear in the context of physical activity; enlisting the support of a friend, family member, or coworker can increase a person’s likelihood of staying physically active.

Individually tailored health behavior change programs constitute a third form of behavioral intervention for physical activity. These programs typically involve information and activities that address goal setting, self-monitoring, reinforcement, development of self-efficacy, problem solving, and relapse prevention; in other words, many of the successful behavior

change strategies described in Chapter 4. Individually tailored health behavior change programs are also generally successful, as they are associated with increases in time spent in physical activity and increases in aerobic fitness (Kahn et al., 2002).

However, individually tailored health behavior change programs can be expensive if delivered in person by a trained counselor. Therefore, many individually tailored programs are delivered via telephone, Internet, or computer. Interventions delivered through these channels generally yield significant increases in physical activity during the intervention period (Goode et al., 2012; Hamel et al., 2011; Neville et al., 2009) and can be as successful as face-to-face programs (Mehta & Sharma, 2012).

People are increasingly turning to smartphone “apps” and other technologies such as wearable fitness trackers to monitor and encourage physical activity. Many of these technologies incorporate features that provide effective behavior change strategies (see Chapter 4), such as self-monitoring of behavior, goal setting, and feedback (Direito et al., 2014). Since the development of these technologies, research has evaluated their effectiveness, with positive results. A systematic review indicated that use of wearables that track physical activity significantly increased physical activity (Brickwood et al., 2019). A meta-analysis that evaluated the effectiveness of wearables and smartphone applications (Gal et al., 2018) showed small to moderate increases in physical activity. Therefore, these technologies offer an easy way to allow those who have started a physical activity program to monitor their progress and stick with their program.



The “buddy system” can make physical activity easier and more enjoyable.

Some smartphone apps—such as the *Pokémon Go* game—take a different approach, by “gamifying” physical activity and providing virtual rewards for exploring one’s community on foot. Obviously, such technologies are only available to people who can afford them, but an increasing segment of the population has access to this technology.

Unfortunately, individually tailored health behavior change programs suffer the problem that many interventions have: They are generally not successful at maintaining physical activity post-intervention (Goode et al., 2012; Hamel et al., 2011; Neville et al., 2009). One phenomenon that contributes to the problem of relapse is the **abstinence violation effect** (Marlatt & Gordon, 1980). When people go five or six days without exercising, they tend to adopt the attitude “I’m out of shape now. It would take too much energy and pain to start over again.” As with the smoker or the abuser of alcohol, this exerciser is allowing one lapse to turn into a full-blown relapse. Research with dropouts from an exercise program (Sears & Stanton, 2001) attempted to warn participants that they may be tempted to permanently quit exercising after a period of inactivity, but that resuming exercise is a better choice than continued inactivity. The abstinence violation effect is an example of one of many psychological factors that influences adherence to physical activity recommendations. However, it would be shortsighted to believe that only psychological factors matter—the physical environment influences adherence as well.

Environmental Interventions Physical activity can be far easier and far more enjoyable if it takes place in a pleasing environment, such as a hike on a trail, a jog on a neighborhood sidewalk, or a stroll through a park. Thus, characteristics of a person’s neighborhood can predict the likelihood of physical activity.

A large study of over 11,000 adults living in 11 different countries confirmed the link between characteristics of neighborhood environments and physical activity (Sallis et al., 2009). People are more likely to meet physical activity guidelines if their neighborhoods have sidewalks on most streets, plenty of shops, bicycle facilities, and free or low-cost recreational facilities. The importance of the neighborhood environment for physical activity among children is critical as well. Children who live in neighborhoods with access to playgrounds, parks, and recreational facilities tend to be more active and less obese (Veugelaers et al., 2008). These associations may emerge for two reasons. First, easier access to

recreational locations makes it easier to exercise. Second, people are more likely to be physically active when they see other people doing the same. For example, simply viewing people engaging in physical activity in and around one's neighborhood can motivate exercise (Kowal & Fortier, 2007).

Thus, one way to increase levels of physical activity is through enhancing access to places that encourage physical activity. These kinds of interventions may include providing access to fitness equipment in the workplace or in community centers, creating trails, or improving park amenities and facilities. Environmental interventions do work, in terms of increasing the physical activity and fitness of those working or living nearby. For example, one systematic review (Chandrabose et al., 2018) evaluated several health measures of cardiac and metabolic health over time related to the built environment. The analysis indicated a strong relationship between walkability of the environment and cardio-metabolic health indicators. Another systematic review (Van Cauwenberg et al., 2018) found that built environments that offer accessibility for physical are especially important for older individuals to become or remain physically active. However, these types of interventions can be quite expensive, and, despite evidence about their effectiveness, there is limited evidence available regarding their cost effectiveness. Regardless, it is important to recognize the key role that the physical environment plays in physical activity.

IN SUMMARY

In the United States and other industrialized countries, a sedentary lifestyle is more common than a physically active one; about 70% of adults fail to comply with recommendations for regular, moderate-to-vigorous exercise. Interventions for improving physical activity include: informational interventions, behavioral and social interventions, and environmental interventions. Informational interventions, such as mass media campaigns, have little effectiveness in changing behavior, unless “point-of-decision” prompts are used. Behavioral and social interventions are more successful in improving physical activity but do not have a good record of maintaining physical activity after the intervention concludes. Environmental interventions may be effective in changing behavior in the long term, but the cost effectiveness of environmental interventions is not clear.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of informational, behavioral, social, technology-based, and environmental engineering interventions for improving adherence to exercise regimen.

Questions

This chapter has addressed six basic questions:

1. **What are the different types of physical activity?**
All physical activity can be subsumed under one or more of five basic categories: isometric, isotonic, isokinetic, anaerobic, and aerobic. Each of these five exercise types has advantages and disadvantages for improving physical fitness. Most people who exercise do so for the benefits from one or another of these five types of physical activity, but no one type of exercise promotes all types of fitness.
2. **Does physical activity benefit the cardiovascular system?**
Most results on the health benefits of exercise have confirmed a strong, positive relationship between

regular physical activity and enhanced cardiovascular health, plus weight control and a favorable cholesterol ratio. This research suggests that a regimen of moderate, brisk physical activity should be prescribed as one of several components in a program of coronary health.

3. **What are some other health benefits of physical activity?**

In addition to improving cardiovascular health, regular physical activity may protect against some kinds of cancer, especially colon and breast cancer; help prevent bone density loss, thus lowering one's risk of osteoporosis; prevent and control type 2 diabetes and help manage type 1 diabetes; and help people live longer.

Besides improving physical fitness and health, regular exercise can confer certain psychological

benefits. Specifically, research has demonstrated that exercises can decrease depression, reduce anxiety, improve sleep, buffer against the harmful effects of stress, and improve cognitive functioning.

4. Can physical activity be hazardous?

Several hazards accompany both regular and occasional exercise. Some runners appear to be addicted to exercise, becoming obsessed with body image and fearful of being prevented from following their exercise regimen. Injuries are frequent among those who exercise regularly, especially if they participate in contact sports or train intensively. However, the most serious hazard is sudden death while exercising, which almost always occurs in people with cardiovascular disease. People who exercise regularly are much less likely than occasional exercisers to die of a heart attack during heavy physical exertion.

5. How much is enough but not too much?

The current pronouncement from the American College of Sports Medicine allowed for two routes to achieve acceptable levels of physical activity. One possibility is moderately vigorous exercise for 30 minutes five times per week, and the other involves intense exercise for 20 minutes three times a week. In addition, individuals should participate in strength training. Although the less intense program of physical activity is not sufficient to promote a high level of fitness, health benefits occur at lower levels of exercise. For cardiovascular health, almost any amount of exercise is better than no exercise.

6. What are effective interventions for improving physical activity?

More than 50% of adults in the United States are too sedentary for good health. One simple and effective intervention for improving physical activity is using “point-of-decision” prompts, which highlight opportunities for people to engage in exercise—such as using stairs instead of an elevator.

Social and behavioral interventions are also effective in promoting adoption of physical activity; people can receive these interventions in person, as well as through the computer, telephone, and Internet. However, the effects of social and behavioral interventions may not be maintained for long after the intervention concludes. One challenge in maintaining physical activity over time is the abstinence violation effect, when people give up on a regimen after a short setback.

Suggested Readings

- Burfoot, A. (2005, August). Does running lower your risk of cancer? *Runner's World*, 40, 60–61. In this article, Amby Burfoot looks at some of the research on exercise and cancer and takes issue with Ken Cooper's statement that anyone who exercises more than the equivalent of 15 miles a week is running for something other than health. Burfoot considers the growing evidence that physical activity may protect against cancer as well as help people recover from cancer.
- Powell, K. E., Paluch, A. E., & Blair, S. N. (2011). Physical activity for health: What kind? How much? How intense? On top of what? *Annual Review of Public Health*, 32, 349–365. This excellent review chapter summarizes a number of key concepts important in understanding the relationship between physical activity and health, such as the intensity of activity, the dose–response relationship, and the importance of initiating even light-intensity activity to improve health.
- Silver, J. K., & Morin, C. (Eds.). (2008). *Understanding fitness: How exercise fuels health and fights disease*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group. This book provides an explanation of the biological processes that occur when people exercise, including a review of the many diseases that exercise can help prevent.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you will be able to...

- 16-1** Learn about health expectancy and how it differs from life expectancy
- 16-2** Define health disparity and identify some of the major racial, ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic disparities that exist in the United States
- 16-3** Identify some of the major challenges that countries face in providing health care, including addressing the care of an aging and diverse population
- 16-4** Recognize the rising costs of health care and the approaches used by various countries to provide health care to their citizens
- 16-5** Recognize the importance of prevention to address challenges in health care
- 16-6** Recognize the unique health risks that college students face
- 16-7** Identify actions that college students can take to reduce common health risks

CHAPTER 16

Future Challenges

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Real-World Profile of Dwayne and Robyn

Challenges for Healthier People

- Increasing the Span of Healthy Life
- Reducing Health Disparities

Outlook for Health Psychology

- Progress in Health Psychology
- Future Challenges for Health Care
- Will Health Psychology Continue to Grow?

Making Health Psychology Personal

- Understanding Your Risks
- What Can You Do to Cultivate a Healthy Lifestyle?

QUESTIONS

This chapter focuses on three basic questions:

1. What role does health psychology play in contributing to the goals of *Healthy People 2030*?
2. What is the outlook for the future of health psychology?
3. How can you use health psychology to cultivate a healthier lifestyle?

How do Dwayne's and Robyn's health habits and attitudes compare with yours? Dwayne is less knowledgeable and concerned with his health than most college students, whereas Robyn is more so. Both Dwayne and Robyn see themselves as healthy people; however, you should know by now that Robyn is more likely to maintain her health, whereas Dwayne is likely to see his deteriorate if his habits persist. In this chapter, we will examine some health issues specific to college students and hope to convince you of health psychology's relevance to your life. But first, let's look at health care and the challenges facing not only health psychologists but also all health care providers in the United States and around the world.

16-1 Challenges for Healthier People

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 16-1** Learn about health expectancy and how it differs from life expectancy
- 16-2** Define health disparity and identify some of the major racial, ethnic, educational, and socioeconomic disparities that exist in the United States

People in the United States, Canada, and other high-income countries are inundated with health information telling of the dangers of smoking, abusing alcohol, eating improperly, and not exercising regularly. As you learned in Chapters 3 and 4, knowledge does not always translate into action, and people have difficulty in adopting these healthy habits. Still, over the past 35 years, U.S. residents have managed to make some healthy changes in their lifestyles, and these changes contribute to the declining mortality for heart disease, stroke, cancer, homicide, and unintentional injuries (USCB, 2011).



Real-World Profile of **DWAYNE AND ROBYN**

Dwayne* is a 21-year-old college junior who seldom thinks about his health—either his present or future health. Dwayne feels good, believes that his present lack of obvious illness is a sign that he is in good health, and assumes that he will always be free of disease and disability.

Dwayne has several habits that have consequences for his health. One of these is his diet, which consists mostly of fast-food burgers, with an occasional fried fish sandwich for variety. However, variety is not a high priority for Dwayne, who eats three meals a day, six days a week at the same fast-food restaurant. Breakfast usually consists of a biscuit, scrambled eggs, sausage, and a soft drink (because he doesn't like coffee). For lunch, he has a burger, fries, and another soft drink. Dinner is a repeat of lunch. He also snacks and often chooses ice cream and candy bars. Despite his “junk food” diet, Dwayne is not overweight.

Dwayne holds other attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that present risks. He seldom exercises or wears seat belts and has few close friends. He believes that his future health is beyond his personal control—that genetics and fate are the underlying determinants of heart disease, cancer, and accidents. Thus, he has thought little about ways of maintaining his health or decreasing his chances of chronic illness or premature death. He does not see a physician regularly. When he feels ill, he takes over-the-counter medication, hoping that he will feel better.

However, Dwayne does some things right. He does not smoke cigarettes or drink alcohol and considers his life as low stress. His abstinence from drinking stems from his religious rather than health beliefs, and his avoidance of smoking comes from an incident during his adolescence when he smoked a cigarette and became sick. His score on the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; see Chapter 5) was as low as anyone's could be, including only one stressful life event—Christmas. Dwayne sees himself as a healthy person.

Robyn* is also a 21-year-old college junior, but her attitudes and behaviors concerning health differ a great deal from Dwayne's. Her differences include a basic attitude—that she has the primary responsibility for her health. Consistent with this attitude, Robyn has adopted a lifestyle that she believes will keep her healthy. Like Dwayne, she does not smoke; she took a puff from a cigarette when she was in fourth grade and coughed for a long time, which discouraged her from smoking. Her father was a smoker during her childhood and adolescence, but she and her mother convinced him to stop smoking in their home. To further avoid exposure to secondhand smoke, Robyn avoids enclosed places where people are smoking. Unlike Dwayne, Robyn drinks alcohol. Her drinking is moderate, and she does not binge drink. Her parents are also moderate drinkers, and Robyn's home was one in which alcohol was consumed but not abused.

Robyn's diet differs dramatically from Dwayne's diet. She seldom eats eggs, whole milk products, beef, or pork; she concentrates on eating lots of fruits and vegetables (yet is not vegetarian). She occasionally allows herself a dessert. Robyn is careful about choosing a low-fat diet because she is concerned about cholesterol. Her grandfather died of heart disease at age 63, and she believes that his smoking and high-fat, high-cholesterol diet hastened his death. Robyn also follows an exercise program, which she finds somewhat difficult to maintain with her school schedule. She takes an aerobic dance class three days a week; she walks 30 minutes a day on those days with no dance class. So far, she has been faithfully maintaining this workout schedule. Robyn sees herself as a healthy person.

*The names have been changed to protect these persons' privacy.

However, unhealthy and risky behaviors still contribute to an increasing rate of obesity, diabetes, and lower respiratory disease.

What are the most current public health goals of the United States? *Healthy People* is a report establishing the U.S. health objectives for upcoming decade. *Healthy People 2030* (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d.), for example,

establishes the U.S. health objectives for the years 2020 through 2030. These objectives include 62 focus areas and over 350 core objectives, along with 23 leading indicators, which appear in [Table 16.1](#). Notice that most of these indicators are major areas of concern to health psychologists. In addition, two of *Healthy People 2030*'s overarching goals are those that health psychology can address: to increase quality and years of

TABLE 16.1 Leading Health Indicators for Healthy People 2030

For all ages:
• Increase number of people who use the oral health care system
• Reduce consumption of calories from added sugars
• Reduce drug overdose deaths
• Reduce exposure to unhealthy air
• Reduce homicides
• Reduce household food insecurity and hunger
• Increase numbers of people who are vaccinated annually against seasonal influenza
• Increase number of people who know their HIV status
• Increase number of people with medical insurance
• Reduce suicides
For infants:
• Reduce infant deaths
For children and adolescents:
• Increase number of fourth grade students whose reading skills are at or above the proficient achievement level for their grade
• Increase number of adolescents with major depressive episodes who receive treatment
• Reduce number of children and adolescents with obesity
• Reduce current use of any tobacco products among adolescents
For adults and older adults:
• Reduce number of adults engaging in binge drinking of alcoholic beverages during the past 30 days
• Increase number of adults who meet minimum guidelines for aerobic physical activity and muscle-strengthening activity
• Increase number of adults who receive a colorectal cancer screening based on the most recent guidelines
• Increase number of adults with hypertension whose blood pressure is under control
• Reduce cigarette smoking in adults
• Increase employment among the working-age population
• Reduce maternal deaths
• Improve the number of new cases of diagnosed diabetes in the population

healthy life and to eliminate health disparities. Although these goals are ambitious and have presented challenges in the past (USDHHS, 2007), the United States has progressed toward or met many prior *Healthy People* goals (USDHHS, 2010a).

Increasing the Span of Healthy Life

The first goal—to increase the span of healthy life—is a bit different from increasing **life expectancy**. Rather than striving for longer lives, many people are now trying to increase their number of well-years. A **well-year** is “the equivalent of a year of completely well life, or a year of life free of dysfunction, symptoms, and health-related problems” (Kaplan & Bush, 1982, p. 64). A concept closely related to well-years is **health expectancy**, defined as the number of years a person can anticipate spending free from disability (Robine & Ritchie, 1991). For example, life expectancy in the United States is about 76 for men and 81 for women, but health expectancy is about 65 for men and 68 for women, leaving both men and women with a discrepancy of about 11 to 13 years of disability (Kyu et al., 2018). Singapore boasts the highest health expectancy (75 for women, 71 for men) of any country; even in Singapore, people can expect approximately 9 to 12 years of disability (Kyu et al., 2018).

In the United States, years of life are increasing, but so are years spent living with some disability (Kyu et al., 2018). U.S. residents do not benefit from increases in healthy life expectancy as much as residents of many other countries (Mathers et al., 2004). Although people in the United States may expect over 65 years of healthy life, this figure ranks 36th in the world in terms of disability-free life expectancy. The United States trails most other industrialized countries because of high rates of smoking-related disease, violence, and AIDS-related health problems. Although the decline in tobacco use in recent decades improves Americans’ healthy life expectancy, these gains will likely be offset by the increasing rate of obesity in the United States (Stewart, Cutler, & Rosen, 2009). **Table 16.2** shows the healthy life expectancy for a selection of countries with both high and low values. As other industrialized countries have health expectancy much greater than the United States, improvements should be possible in the United States.

What explains the difference between life expectancy and health expectancy? Economic factors play an important role. The differences between life expectancy and health expectancy are even larger when comparing the richest and poorest countries or even the richest and poorest segments of the population within a country (Jagger et al., 2009; Mathers et al., 2004; McIntosh et al., 2009). In the United States, 65-year-old residents of the more affluent states of Hawaii and Connecticut



Ariel Skelley/Getty Images

Increasing the span of healthy life is a goal for health psychologists.

can expect over 15 more years of healthy life, but residents of the less affluent states of Mississippi and West Virginia can expect only 11 more (Chang et al., 2013). Wealthy people not only live longer but also have more years of healthy life.

The changing nature of disease also accounts for the difference between life expectancy and health expectancy. Diseases that kill people will influence life expectancy; diseases that compromise health will influence health expectancy. For example, circulatory disorders head both lists, but disorders producing restricted movement and respiratory disorders are responsible for producing lost health expectancy, whereas cancer and accidents are major sources of lost life expectancy. Depression also compromises health expectancy more so than it compromises life expectancy (Reynolds, Haley, & Kozlenko, 2008). Thus, interventions aimed at increasing life expectancy will not necessarily improve health expectancy and quality of life. For this reason, experts recommend using a population's health expectancy as an indicator of overall population health (Steifel, Perla, & Zell, 2010).

Reducing Health Disparities

Healthy People 2030 defines a **health disparity** as “a particular type of health difference that is closely linked with social, economic, and/or environmental disadvantage” (ODPHP, n.d.). Disparities exist based on race and ethnicity, education, income, gender, sexual orientation, disability status, special health care needs, and geographic location. These disparities are important to understand and reduce; however, racial and ethnic disparities are the most documented health disparities in the United States. In the United States, ethnicity is not separable from social, economic, and educational factors that contribute to disease as well as to seeking and receiving medical care (Kawachi, Daniels, & Robinson, 2005). Being poor with a low educational level elevates risks for many diseases and provides a poorer prognosis for those who are ill. These disadvantages also apply to children in these socioeconomic groups (Wen, 2007). African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans have lower average educational levels and incomes than European Americans and Asian Americans (USCB, 2011), and education relates to income. Thus, the racial and ethnic disparities are intertwined with income and education disparities, complicating our understanding of the underlying reasons for health disparities among people of different ethnic backgrounds.

TABLE 16.2 Healthy Life Expectancy for Selected Nations, 2017

Country	Healthy Life Expectancy
Singapore	75
Japan	73
Italy	72
Switzerland	72
Iceland	72
Australia	71
Sweden	71
Canada	71
Colombia	71
Costa Rica	70
Germany	70
United Kingdom	70
Cuba	69
China	69
USA	67
Mexico	66
Vietnam	66
Brazil	66
Iraq	65
Russian	62
India	60
Rwanda	60
Haiti	57
Afghanistan	54
Sierra Leone	53

Source: GBD 2017 DALYs and HALE Collaborators (2018). Global, regional, and national disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs) for 359 diseases and injuries and healthy life expectancy (HALE) for 195 countries and territories, 1990–2017: A systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. *The Lancet*, 392(10159), 1859–1922.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities African Americans, compared with European Americans, have a shorter life expectancy as well as a higher infant mortality rate, more homicide deaths, higher rates of cardiovascular disease, higher cancer mortality, and more tuberculosis and diabetes (USCB, 2011). They also experience lower

health expectancy; even when European Americans and African Americans in the United States reach the age of 65, European Americans can expect three years more of healthy life expectancy compared to African Americans (Chang et al., 2013). Inadequate medical treatment may be a factor: African Americans receive poorer care than European Americans on nearly half of the quality measures of medical care (AHRQ, 2011). But even when equating for income (De Lew & Weinick, 2000) and access to medical care (Schneider, Zaslavsky, & Epstein, 2002), African Americans have poorer outcomes than European Americans. Part of the discrepancy may be due to **health literacy**, the ability to read and understand health information to make health-related decisions (Paasche-Orlow et al., 2005; Rudd, 2007). Disparities in health literacy partly account for some ethnic health disparities, such as ethnic differences in vaccination (Bennett et al., 2009), HIV and diabetes management (Osborn et al., 2009; Waldrop-Valverde et al., 2010), and medication use (Bailey et al., 2009). The Would You Believe . . . ? box discusses the importance of health literacy and some ways that health psychologists can increase people's understanding of health information.

Discrimination may also be a factor contributing to inadequate medical treatment for African Americans (Brown et al., 2008; Smiles, 2002). For example, African Americans receive less aggressive treatment for symptoms of coronary heart disease, are less likely to be referred to a cardiologist than European Americans, are less likely to receive kidney dialysis, and are less likely to receive the most effective treatments for HIV infection (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2002). Many physicians believe that race or ethnicity plays no role in the care they provide (Lillie-Blanton et al., 2004), but these results and the reports by African Americans (Brown et al., 2008) indicate otherwise. The COVID-19 pandemic also affected African Americans more than other ethnic groups in the United States. African Americans were more likely die of COVID-19, largely because they had more severe symptoms at hospital admission (Price-Haywood et al., 2020). The causes of this disparity are complex, but experts point to more systemic aspects of discrimination against African Americans. These systemic factors include higher rates of risk factors such as obesity, more limited access to medical care, more crowded housing conditions, and jobs that put African Americans at greater risk of exposure to the virus (Gould & Wilson, 2020).

Low economic status, lack of access to medical care, and poor health literacy affect Native Americans

at least as strongly as African Americans (AHRQ, 2011; USDHHS, 2007). Native Americans have a shorter life expectancy, a higher mortality rate, higher infant mortality, and higher rates of infectious illness than European Americans (Hayes-Bautista et al., 2002). Many Native Americans receive medical care from the Indian Health Service, but that organization has a history of poor funding as well as mistreatment of Native American patients that has led to mistrust (Keltner, Kelley, & Smith, 2004). In addition, many Native Americans live in rural settings in which medical care services are limited. These circumstances contribute to decreased access to medical care, which is related to poor health, but Native Americans who live in urban areas also experience poor health and limited access to medical care (Castor et al., 2006). Native Americans also exhibit many risky behaviors that influence their health, including high rates of smoking and alcohol abuse, poor diet, and behaviors that increase injuries and deaths from violence. Native Americans, then, are one of the groups poorly served by the current system of medical care and health education in the United States.

Many Hispanic Americans also experience low income and educational status. However, Hispanics in the United States include a variety of groups, and their health and longevity tend to vary with income and education. Cuban Americans generally have higher education and economic levels than Mexican Americans or Puerto Ricans, and Cuban Americans are more likely to have access to regular medical care and physician visits (LaVeist, Bowie, & Cooley-Quille, 2000). Cubans have better health, and Puerto Ricans tend to have poorer health, than other groups of Hispanics in the United States (Borrell, 2005).

Hispanic Americans are much more likely to develop diabetes, obesity, and hypertension than European Americans (USDHHS, 2000). Young Hispanic American men are at sharply increased risk of violent death (Hayes-Bautista et al., 2002), which may be the reason for the overall lower life expectancy of Hispanic Americans. In other age groups, Hispanics fare about the same as or better than European Americans on some health and mortality measures. Hispanic Americans have a lower death rate than many other ethnic groups—including European Americans—for heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer. These low death rates seem puzzling, given the lower socioeconomic status and higher rates of smoking, obesity, and hypertension among some Hispanic Americans.

Would You BELIEVE...?

Health Literacy Can Improve by “Thinking Outside the Box”

Sometimes, even the most well-intentioned health interventions may not work for one simple reason: People do not understand the information presented. This is a problem faced not merely by people with low levels of health literacy. It is a problem likely faced by you.

In the 1990s, several countries—including the United States, Canada, Mexico, and United Kingdom—passed laws requiring food manufacturers to post a “Nutrition Facts” box on food packaging. The governments’ goal with this legislation was to help consumers make healthier and more informed food choices. In the United States, the “Nutrition Facts” box typically appears on the back of the product and reports information such as serving size, calories, fat, cholesterol, sodium, vitamins, and minerals.

If you are like most people, you probably do not pay much attention to—or even understand—the information presented in these boxes. People’s use of nutrition information boxes declined from 1996 to 2006 (Todd & Variyam, 2008). Why? Despite the government’s best efforts to design a box that would be easy to read, many people find it difficult to interpret all

the numerical information (IOM, 2012). How much fat is too much fat? How big is a serving size? Is one snack food healthier than another snack food? These are the kinds of questions that consumers need answers to, but current nutrition boxes effectively hide this information by tacking it to the back of a package and presenting it as a list of nearly indecipherable numbers.

Most experts think the cause of this problem is not people’s lack of health literacy, but rather, problems with how the labels are designed. For example, experts in health literacy know that images often convey information better than numbers do (Houts et al., 2006). Recently, a group of health psychologists, public health experts, marketers, and nutritionists convened to recommend broad changes to food nutrition labels (IOM, 2012). This group concluded that consumers should be able to make better food choices when nutrition information appears on the *front* of the package and use symbols and images rather than numbers to convey important information. Furthermore, the symbols should represent only the most essential nutrition information, such as calories, saturated and *trans* fats, sodium,

and added sugars. An example of a front-of-package nutrition symbol system designed by the United Kingdom appears in this box. It uses standard traffic light colors to inform consumers that a product is high, medium, or low in a particular element. Which system is easier for you to understand: the current U.S. fact box or the redesigned UK symbols? In a laboratory experiment, researchers found that the UK labels were effective in guiding healthy food choices, even though people tended to avoid the “reds” (unhealthy choices) more than they chose the “greens” (healthy choices) (Scarborough et al., 2015).

This is one example of how health psychologists can address literacy issues by rethinking how marketers and interventions present information. Another example of an innovative approach to addressing health literacy issues is the use of *telenovelas* to communicate health information to Latino populations. Telenovelas are short, dramatic “soap operas,” immensely popular in Latino culture, that focus on romantic and middle-class issues. Some health psychologists created “entertainment interventions” using the *telenovela* format to communicate to Spanish-speaking audiences about the importance of breast screening (Wilkin et al., 2007) and HIV testing (Olshefsky et al., 2007). Both interventions were deemed successful, largely because they presented health information in a format that the audience was familiar with and could easily understand.

Thus, addressing disparities in health literacy is a public health challenge and will require extensive efforts to ensure that people understand important information. With more “thinking outside of the box,” efforts to address disparities in health literacy may be more successful.



Libby Welch/Alamy Stock Photo

The UK Traffic Light system of nutrition labeling makes it easier for people to understand important health information.



Many people in the United States face barriers in obtaining medical care.

iStockPhoto.com/Rich Legg

This observation of relatively good health of Hispanic Americans despite generally lower socioeconomic status has been called the “Hispanic health paradox” (Franzini, Ribble, & Keddle, 2001). Some experts suggest that this paradox may be due to stronger social support networks among and between Hispanic families, or less assimilation of recent immigrants to mainstream American culture and adoption of its poor health habits. As Hispanic Americans become more acculturated to mainstream American culture, they may adopt American lifestyles but have not yet had time to develop the chronic diseases typical of the United States (Borrell, 2005).

Asian Americans have lower infant mortality, longer life expectancy, fewer lung and breast cancer deaths, and lower cardiovascular death rates than other ethnic groups. Like Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans come from a variety of ethnicities, including Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Cambodian. Many Asian cultures share values that promote good health, such as strong social and family ties, but other factors present barriers to good health. For example, Vietnamese and Cambodian cultures show a higher tolerance for family violence than European American culture (Weil & Lee, 2004). Overall, Asian Americans have the longest life expectancy and best health of any ethnic group in the United States.

Educational and Socioeconomic Disparities Low income has an obvious connection to lower standards of medical care. After adjusting for poverty, many of the health disadvantages of ethnicity disappear (Krieger et al., 2005). One medical care disadvantage related to poverty is a lack of insurance, which makes access to medical care more difficult in the United States. However, universal access to medical care does not completely remove the disparities among socioeconomic groups (Lasser, Himmelstein, & Woolhandler, 2006; Martikainen, Valkonen, & Martelin, 2001). Even in countries that have universal access to medical care, health disparities between poor and wealthy people persist, suggesting that factors other than access to medical care are involved in maintaining health.

Education and socioeconomic level are two factors that may influence health status—independent of access to medical care. Across ethnic groups and in countries around the world, people who have higher education and income tend to have better health and longevity than those with lower education and income (Crimmins & Saito, 2001; Mackenbach et al., 2008). As the Would You Believe . . . ? box in Chapter 1 detailed, people who attend college have many health advantages. Compared with those with a high school education or less, those who attend college live longer and healthier, with lower rates of infectious and chronic diseases and unintentional injuries (NCHS, 2011). These advantages

should not be surprising, considering the low rate of smoking among those who attend or graduate from college compared with people with fewer than 12 years of education; smoking is a leading contributor to ill health and death.

In addition, people with low education and low socioeconomic status are more likely to have risky health habits, such as eating a high-fat diet and leading a sedentary life, than people with higher incomes and more education. In some cases, these health habits may be intentional choices, but in other cases they may be shaped by the environments where low-income Americans live; nearly 24 million Americans, mostly those of low socioeconomic status, live in “food deserts,” which are areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food. Although improved access to medical care and decreased discrimination in medical care delivery will probably eliminate some of the health disparities among ethnic groups, changes in health-related behaviors, affordable and accessible options for healthy behavior, and improved living conditions will also be necessary to achieve the goal of eliminating health disparities in the United States.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Health Disparities

Although racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic health disparities are the most well documented, LGBT health disparities are an increasing focus in both research and advocacy (IOM, 2011). Until recently, U.S. LGBT populations did not have many of the same rights or advantages as non-LGBT individuals, including rights to marriage or freedom from social stigma and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. LGBT youth are more likely than non-LGBT peers to be bullied, commit suicide, experience mental health issues, engage in sexual risk behaviors or substance use, or be forced to homelessness. LGBT seniors are more likely than non-LGBT seniors to live alone and not have children, which may limit the sources of assistance they can rely on with daily living or medical needs. As a possible consequence of the stresses of discrimination, lesbian women have high rates of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use, which are associated with cardiovascular disease and obesity (Evans-Polce et al., 2020; Krueger et al., 2020; O’Hanlan & Iser, 2007). Gay men, too, have higher rates of substance use (Evans-Polce et al., 2020; Krueger et al., 2020), and face the threat of HIV and AIDS more so than any other group. Transgender individuals experience even higher rates of

victimization compared to heterosexual, gay or lesbian individuals, and transgender women of color experience the highest levels of violence of any group (Grant et al., 2011). Sexual minorities may also have more limited access to quality health care, as they may either be excluded from a partner’s health insurance plan, face discrimination by health care providers, or experience discomfort in disclosing sexual orientation or gender identity to health care providers (USDHHS, 2011).

IN SUMMARY

People in the United States and other industrialized countries are becoming more health conscious, and both government policy and individual behavior reflect this concern. *Healthy People 2030* states two overarching goals for the U.S. population: (1) to increase the quality and years of healthy life and (2) to eliminate health disparities. The first goal includes increasing the number of well-years or health expectancy—that is, years free of dysfunction, disease symptoms, and health-related problems. The second goal—eliminating disparities in health care—is far from being met, in part because people at the upper socioeconomic level continue to make greater gains in health status than do those at the lower levels. Ethnicity remains a factor in health and medical care, not only in the United States but also in other countries. In the United States, African Americans and Native Americans experience great disadvantages compared with Asian Americans and European Americans. Some Hispanics experience health advantages, and others experience disadvantages. The factors of education and income are intertwined with ethnicity, complicating understanding of the source of disparities in health.

APPLY WHAT YOU’VE LEARNED

1. Select a group—it could be a racial/ethnic group, a socioeconomic group, or a gender or sexual minority group—and use the internet to learn about any health disparities that exist for that group. What are some possible reasons for the disparity? Consider the roles of access to health care, treatment by health care providers, discrimination, behaviors, beliefs, social factors, and education and income. What do you think would need to be improved to reduce the disparity?

16-2 Outlook for Health Psychology

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 16-3** Identify some of the major challenges that countries face in providing health care, including addressing the care of an aging and diverse population
- 16-4** Recognize the rising costs of health care and the approaches used by various countries to provide health care to their citizens
- 16-5** Recognize the importance of prevention to address challenges in health care

Since the founding of health psychology more than 30 years ago, the field has blossomed, prompting a plethora of research and clinical applications to a variety of health-related behaviors and outcomes. That progress has touched many areas of health care, but social and economic forces will influence the future of the field.

Progress in Health Psychology

Until the 1970s, very few psychologists focused on physical health as an area of research (APA Task Force on Health Research, 1976). However, during the past 40 years, psychology research on health issues accelerated to the point that it has changed the field of psychology, making health-related issues common topics in psychology journals. Health psychologists are now frequent contributors to journals in medicine and health care.

Despite the growth of health psychology and its ability to contribute to health care, the field faces several challenges. One major challenge is acceptance by other health care practitioners, an acceptance that continues to grow. Like physicians and patients, health psychologists also face the most serious problem within medical care—namely, escalating costs. In an environment of limited resources, psychologists will need to justify the costs that their services add to health care (Thielke, Thompson, & Stuart, 2011; Tovian, 2004). Although the diagnostic and therapeutic techniques used by health psychologists have demonstrated effectiveness, these procedures also have financial costs. Health

psychology must justify its costs by offering services that meet the needs of individuals and society while fitting within a troubled health care system (IOM, 2010).

Future Challenges for Health Care

Health and medical care in the United States face enormous challenges. The two goals of *Healthy People 2030*—to add years of healthy life and to eliminate disparities in providing health care—will be difficult to achieve. Adding years of healthy life to an aging population is a daunting task. As the population ages, chronic illnesses and chronic pain become more common.

In 1900, only 4% of the population was over 65; in 2006, more than 13% of U.S. citizens had reached that age (USCB, 2011). During this same period, life expectancy increased from 47 to 78 years. Experts project that life expectancy in the United States will reach 80 years by the year 2020 (see [Figure 16.1](#)), with more than 19 million people, or 6.1% of the total population, over age 75.

As the population continues to age during the next few decades, psychology will play an important role in helping older people achieve and maintain healthy and productive lifestyles and adjust to the problems of chronic illness. As we have seen, health psychology plays an important role in preventing illness, promoting healthy aging, and helping people cope with pain. In old age, lifestyles can still be changed to help prevent illness, but health psychology's alliance with gerontology will more likely produce an emphasis on promoting and maintaining health, managing pain, and formulating health care policy.

The elimination of health disparities based on gender, ethnicity, age, income, educational level, and disability will also prove difficult, and increasing diversity will continue to challenge the health care system. As we discussed earlier in this chapter, many ethnic disparities trace back to economic, environmental, educational, and health literacy and health care access differences among ethnic groups (Lasser et al., 2006; USDHHS, 2007). The health disparity attributable to gender is not so easy to understand. Women receive poorer health care yet have longer life expectancies. This survival advantage was small in 1900, grew to more than seven years during the 1970s, and has declined to about five years (USCB, 2011). Efforts to trace this gender difference to biology have been largely unsuccessful,

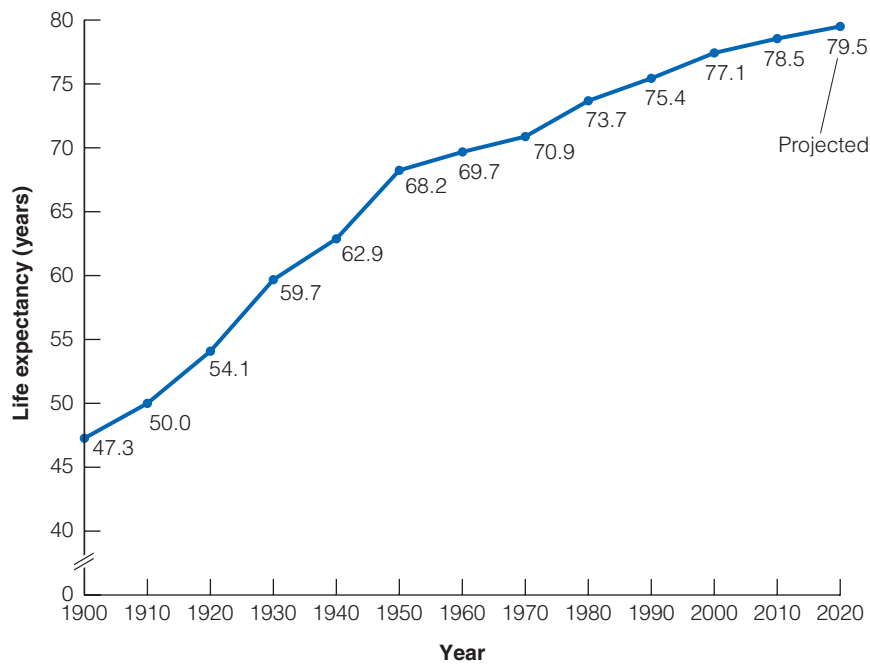


FIGURE 16.1 Actual and projected life expectancy, United States, 1900 to 2020.

Sources: Data from *Historical statistics of the United States: Colonial times to 1970* (p. 55), by U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1975, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; *Statistical abstracts of the United States: 2001* (p. 73); *Statistical abstracts of the United States, 2012*, by U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2011, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

but health-related behaviors, social support, and coping strategies favor women (Whitfield et al., 2002). Importantly, the escalating costs of medical care in the United States will place limits on the extent that health care policies and interventions can successfully address disparities.

Controlling Health Care Costs The richest nation in the world is having trouble paying its medical bills. Health and medical care costs in the United States have escalated at a higher rate than inflation and other costs of living (Bodenheimer, 2005a; Mongan, Ferris, & Lee, 2008), leaving many people unable to afford medical care and others in the position of fearing that they will not be able to do so in the future.

Several factors contribute to such high costs. These factors include the proliferation of expensive technology, a large proportion of physicians who are specialists, inefficient administration, inappropriate treatments, and a profit-oriented system that resists controls (IOM, 2010).

Figure 16.2 shows where health care dollars go. Hospitals receive 39% and physicians 23% of the dollars spent (NCHS, 2019). Although physicians receive less of the health care dollar than hospitals, their fees contribute significantly to the high cost of health care (Bodenheimer, 2005c). Managed care curtailed physicians' fees during the late 1980s and early 1990s, but the backlash against managed care loosened these restrictions, and physicians' fees began to increase again in the late 1990s. The number of specialists adds to the cost of medical care, and the scarcity of primary care/family practitioners (and the lack of incentive for going into primary care) also plays a role (Sepulveda, Bodenheimer, & Grundy, 2008). Ironically, more physicians created competition, but rather than decreasing costs, this situation has contributed to higher costs (Weitz, 2010).

Administrative costs also contribute to the high health care costs in the United States (Bodenheimer, 2005a; Mongan et al., 2008). The complex system of insurance, private physicians, private and



FIGURE 16.2 Where health care dollars go, 2017.

Source: *Health, United States, 2018, 2019*, by National Center for Health Statistics, Hyattsville, MD. Figure 18.

public hospitals, and government-supported medical programs such as Medicare produced different procedures, forms, payment plans, expenses allowed, maximum payments, and deductibles involved in payment for medical services. Thus, payment is a complex matter, which adds to people's frustration in dealing with the medical care system and creates possibilities for errors and fraud.

Health care reform is an urgent priority for the United States, but many conflicting interests have prevented widespread changes (Bodenheimer, 2005c; Mongan et al., 2008). During the 1980s, health maintenance organizations (HMOs) proliferated to control costs (Weitz, 2010). Originally, HMOs were nonprofit organizations oriented toward preventive care, but corporations entered the HMO market and profit became a motive. The growth of HMOs and the restriction of care received through these organizations contributed to slowing the medical care cost escalation. A backlash against the restrictions on care imposed by HMOs produced patients' rights movements, which have edged the system back toward high spending.

Can the United States provide quality medical care more efficiently? Other industrialized countries, such as Canada, Japan, Australia, the countries of Western

Europe, and Scandinavia, share certain factors with the United States—aging populations with high rates of cardiovascular disease, cancer, and other chronic diseases—that pose similar challenges for their medical care systems (Bodenheimer, 2005b). Many of these countries do a better job of providing medical care to a larger percentage of their residents at lower cost than does the U.S. system. Their longer life expectancies and health expectancies are testimony to the effectiveness of their systems.

Germany, Canada, Japan, and Great Britain all face the problem of escalating medical care costs, and these nations also struggle to contain rising costs (Weitz, 2010). The history of medical care costs in these countries and the United States appears in [Figure 16.3](#). These countries have managed to contain expenditures by controlling at least some of the factors that account for the rise in medical costs in the United States: Canada has a single-payer system, which minimizes administrative costs; Great Britain limits access to high-technology medicine; and Germany imposes some limits on payments to physicians and limits hospitals' purchases of high-technology equipment. Japan has an insurance system as the United States does, but insurers do not compete with one another; the government regulates

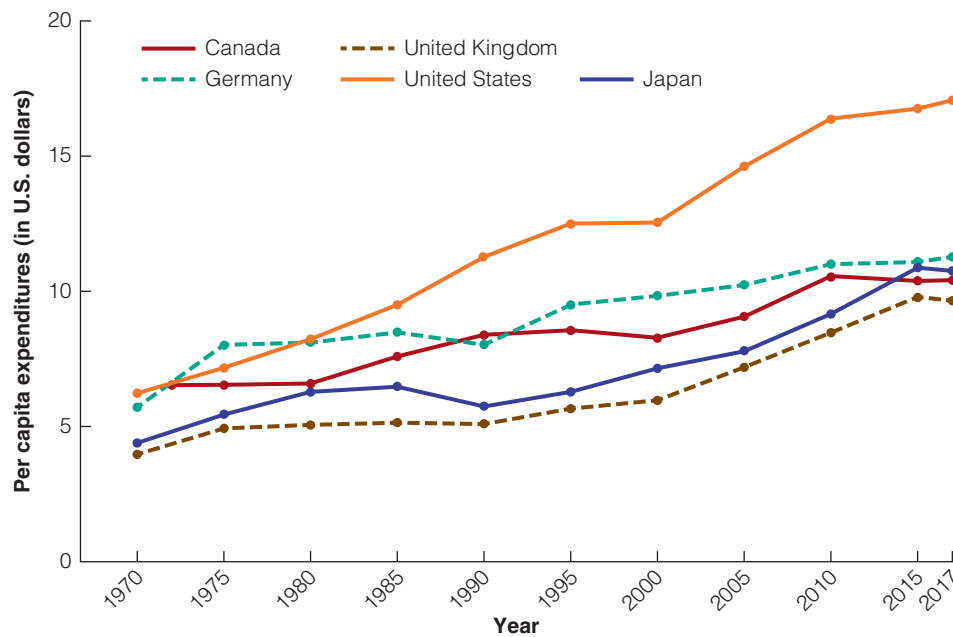


FIGURE 16.3 Health care expenditures in Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, and the United States, 1970 to 2017.

Source: Sawyer, B., & Cox, C. (2018). *How does health spending in the U.S. compare to other countries?* Peterson-KFF Health System Tracker, December 7, 2018.

the cost of services and fees. Japan, however, has lower rates of obesity than many other countries, which contributes to a healthier population.

Each strategy for cost containment has several drawbacks. For example, people have quicker access to medical procedures such as MRIs, mammograms, and knee replacement surgery in the United States than in Canada, but these procedures are significantly more expensive in the United States (Bodenheimer, 2005b). Time delays for some services may pose risks, but in other cases, patients in the United States are overtreated, and limiting access could minimally influence health outcomes (IOM, 2010) or may actually boost health and life expectancy (Emanuel & Fuchs, 2008; Research and Policy Committee, 2002). Canadians' longer life expectancy suggests that the delays they experience do not pose major threats (Lasser et al., 2006).

By devising systems in which all people have access to health care, Germany, Canada, Great Britain, and Japan have diminished competitive profit making, which remains a central feature of the U.S. system (Mahar, 2006). These four countries have

different systems for paying for medical care, and all have experienced cost problems, but each has universal coverage, whereas a growing percentage of people in the United States have limited access to medical care. In 2010, U.S. president Barack Obama signed into law the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which requires all Americans to maintain health insurance coverage, while also establishing a marketplace in which Americans choose from various health care insurance plans and coverage. Implementation of this reform plan has been challenged on several grounds, including its constitutionality. In 2012, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of most of this law, and its provisions were gradually enacted; however, attempts to repeal aspects of the policies continue. Still, health care reform has been—and remains—an urgent issue in the United States (IOM, 2010).

The Importance of Prevention About 70% of the cost of medical care is spent on 10% of the population, whereas healthy people (about 50% of the population) account for about 3% of medical care expenditures

(Bodenheimer & Fernandez, 2005). These statistics highlight the importance of maintaining and promoting health to contain medical care costs. Thus, health psychologists can have a role in reducing medical care costs because unhealthy behaviors contribute to the chronic diseases that generate most expenses, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and chronic lower respiratory disease. Those with good health habits have lifetime medical costs of about *half* those for people with poor health habits. However, people who live longer have years to accrue medical costs, so even good health can be costly in the long run (van Baal et al., 2008). Promotion of good health habits is an important way to decrease the need for medical services in the short run.

Reducing the demand for medical services is another approach to controlling medical care costs (Fries, 1998), which may be a good strategy to move people toward self-care. The availability of a wide range of medical technology has led to the widespread belief that modern medicine can cure any disease, and this belief fosters an overreliance on medicine to heal rather than a reliance on good health habits to avoid disease and on self-management for people with chronic conditions. As we discussed in Chapter 4, building feelings of personal efficacy for health—such as the beliefs that Robyn held—can help reduce the demand for medical services; this approach has potential benefits for health in U.S. society. For example, encouraging individuals with chronic health problems to join self-help groups may reduce their need for intensive medical care (Humphreys & Moos, 2007). Additional research in this area may reveal that this approach can be a good strategy for containing medical care costs.

Controlling medical care costs will require substantial changes in the U.S. health care system. Insurance companies, hospitals, and physicians are all affected by health care reform and have all fought against changes (Mongan et al., 2008). As our examination of health care systems in other countries showed, no system can provide the best quality of medical care for low costs, but many countries do a better job than the United States.

Adapting to Changing Health Care Needs Chronic illnesses now are the leading cause of death and disability in the United States and other industrialized countries. Yet, the medical care system remains oriented toward providing acute care for sick people rather than providing services that will prevent, ameliorate, or

manage chronic conditions. That is, the medical care system has not responded to meet the needs created by changed patterns of disease that occurred during the 20th century (Bodenheimer, 2005c). Controlling chronic illness can occur through two routes: management to control these disabling conditions and prevention to avoid them.

Management of chronic illness is a current need and will become even more important in the future. Cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic lower respiratory disease, and diabetes account for nearly 70% of deaths in the United States (USCB, 2011). However, medical care for these and other chronic illnesses is plagued by undertreatment, overtreatment, and mistreatment. For example, overtreatment occurred with 30% of individuals attending a primary care clinic, who were diagnosed with asthma and prescribed inhaled corticosteroids despite a lack of evidence for symptoms of asthma (Lucas et al., 2008). Undertreatment occurred in an analysis of management of hypertension in patients who had experienced a stroke (Elkins, 2006), 20% to 30% of who did not receive treatment for diagnosed hypertension. Mistreatment occurs when health care providers make medical errors, which occurs with alarming frequency (HealthGrades, 2011). A system that provides more effective management of chronic illnesses will demand a shift from hospital- and physician-based care to a team approach that includes access to medical care and patient education to improve monitoring and self-care.

Self-care—rather than medical care—is a priority for prevention, which is a strategy that can reduce the need for medical services. In general, primary prevention offers more savings than secondary prevention. *Primary prevention* consists of immunizations and programs that encourage lifestyle changes; this type of prevention is usually a good bargain. Immunizations have some potential for harm but remain good choices unless the risk from side effects of the immunization is comparable to the risk of catching the disease. Programs that encourage people to quit smoking, eat properly, exercise, and moderate their drinking generally have low cost and little potential to do harm (Clark, 2008). In addition, some of these behaviors, such as smoking and inactivity, are risks for many health problems, and efforts oriented toward changing these behaviors can pay off by decreasing risks for several disorders. For example, a study of people who led a life that included the recommended exercise, body mass index, eating habits, and no history of smoking

(Fraser & Shavlike, 2001) concluded that a healthy lifestyle can add 10 years to one's life. Thus, primary prevention efforts pose few risks and offer many potential benefits.

Most prevention efforts target young and middle-aged adults who feel the need to change their behavior for health reasons. Such people are generally more responsive to prevention efforts than adolescents because adults generally recognize greater susceptibility to disease. Health habits begun later in life can add health years to life (Siegler et al., 2002), but lifelong health habits should reap greater rewards. Thus, broadening prevention efforts to adolescents and young adults would be even more advantageous, but this group has been even more neglected in terms of lifestyle interventions (Williams, Holmbeck, & Greenley, 2002). Most of the health research and interventions for adolescents center on injury prevention and smoking deterrence, but adolescents build a foundation for a lifetime of health-related behaviors. Thus, primary prevention efforts tailored for people throughout the life span have the potential to improve health and life expectancy.

Secondary prevention consists of screening people at risk for developing a disease to find potential problems in their early and more treatable stages. However, such efforts can be costly because the number of people at risk may be much larger than the number who will develop the disease. Based on the economic considerations of cost–benefit analysis—that is, how much money is spent and how much is saved—secondary prevention may cost more than it saves.

However, neither hospitals' nor physicians' primary focus is on prevention services. Hospitals focus on acute care, and physicians' time is too expensive to focus on health education. Public health agencies, health educators, and health psychologists can provide health education in a more cost-effective manner than hospitals and physicians. Broadening the role of these entities in the health care system may provide better care as well as offer the potential for controlling medical care costs.

Will Health Psychology Continue to Grow?

The problems in the U.S. health care system influence people in clinical health psychology and behavioral medicine because these practitioners must work within that distressed system and demonstrate that the

services they provide have value (IOM, 2010; Tovian, 2004). However, health psychologists are also working to reform the system. Their commitment to the biopsychosocial model has helped to promote this model as a more comprehensive view of health and to end the false dichotomy between mental and physical health (Suls & Rothman, 2004). Clinical health psychologists have firmly established their expertise as consultants, but health psychologists may become even more prominent as health care providers. Kaiser Permanente of Northern California designated psychologists as primary health care providers in its health maintenance facilities more than a decade ago (Bruns, 1998), and programs are currently in place for training health psychologists to be primary providers (McDaniel & le Roux, 2007). These psychologists typically become behavioral health or behavioral medicine specialists and serve as part of teams that implement an integrated care approach to health care services. Psychologists are increasingly involved in team-based approaches to primary care (Nash et al., 2012), a trend that is likely to continue if the cost effectiveness of the psychologist's role can be demonstrated (Thielke et al., 2011).

Technological and medical advances create not only new opportunities to improve health but also new issues for health psychology to address. One of the greatest scientific achievements of the last decade was the mapping of the human genome, which allowed researchers unprecedented opportunity to identify the genes that predispose people to various health conditions. As the genetic basis of health conditions becomes clearer, genetic tests will become increasingly available to the public. Health psychologists are ideally poised to help the health care system find ways to improve people's understanding of genetic risk information, to understand their emotional responses to test results, and to encourage high-risk individuals to maintain a healthy lifestyle (Saab et al., 2004). Other technological advances such as the Internet and smartphones allow for new methods of intervention, as these channels are being used to facilitate smoking cessation (Wetter et al., 2011), pain management (Rosser & Eccleston, 2011), and diabetes self-management (Arsand et al., 2010). Given their expertise in understanding health behavior, health literacy, and risk communication, psychologists will play an important role in designing and evaluating technology-based interventions for health behavior.

IN SUMMARY

Health psychology has made significant contributions to health care research and practice but must meet a number of challenges to continue to grow. Several of these challenges relate to the troubled U.S. health care system. Medical care costs have risen in the United States more rapidly than in other industrialized countries, many of which manage to provide health care to a wider segment of their population and with a better outcome in terms of life expectancy and health expectancy. The United States needs to reform its inefficient medical care system so that a larger segment of the population can receive quality health care services.

The future of health care will demand better management of chronic illnesses and a greater emphasis on prevention. The aging population will increase the need for management of chronic conditions that are more common among older people. Prevention may be the key both to better health and to controlling medical care costs. Health psychology has a role to play in both the management and prevention of chronic illness, as reflected in the growth of the field of primary care psychology. Technological and medical advances such as genetic testing and smartphone technology present new opportunities for psychologists to contribute to the changing landscape of health care.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Considering all that you have learned thus far, what do you feel the value of health psychologists are in the health care system of your country? What are the advantages using the research and services of health psychologists? What are disadvantages? What are services that health psychologists provide that medical doctors may not be able to provide as well?

16-3 Making Health Psychology Personal

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 16-6** Recognize the unique health risks that college students face
- 16-7** Identify actions that college students can take to reduce common health risks

At the beginning of this chapter, we met Dwayne Brown and Robyn Green, two college students with varying attitudes toward health and differing health-related behaviors. You may see similarities and differences between Dwayne's and Robyn's behavior and your own. By contrasting their behavior with that of typical college students and analyzing their actions and attitudes, you may be able to understand your risks and form a plan to adopt health behaviors that will lead you to a healthier and longer life.

Understanding Your Risks

Like Dwayne and Robyn, nearly 90% of college students rate their health as good, if not excellent (American College Health Association [ACHA], 2020). That perception is consistent with statistics on morbidity and mortality (USCB, 2011); young adults have a lower incidence of disease and death than older adults. The perception of good health may be beneficial, but that view may also create hazards by leading young adults (like Dwayne) to believe that their good health will continue, regardless of their behavior. This view is dangerously incorrect and may even increase the risks for the leading cause of death to this age group—unintentional injury (accidents). Indeed, both unintentional injury and intentional violence are leading causes of injury and death for people before age 45.

Injury and Violence As the leading killers of young people, injuries and violence lead to more lost years of life than any other source. For example, each cancer-related death accounts for an average of 19 lost years of life, but each death due to unintentional injury steals an average of 33 years from a person's life expectancy (USCB, 2011). Sadly, most deaths among college students result from behaviors that contribute to either unintentional or intentional injuries.

Automobile crashes are by far the leading cause of fatal injuries among adolescents and young adults; they account for about two-thirds of fatalities from unintentional injuries for young people 15 to 24 (USCB, 2011). Nearly half of these deaths are due to drinking and driving (Hingson, Heeren, Winter, & Wechsler, 2005). In the United States, young adults aged 21 to 24 lead all other age groups in a frightening statistic: fatalities due to drunk driving (USCB, 2011). In countries around the world, driving after drinking is an unfortunately common practice for college students, and countries with higher rates of this practice also have higher rates of traffic fatalities (Steptoe et al., 2004). The university environment appears to contribute to this dangerous

behavior; college students are more likely than their nonstudent peers to drive after drinking (Hingson et al., 2005). Fortunately, awareness of the dangers of drunk driving has led to a decrease in this behavior in the past decades (Hingson, Zha, & Smyth, 2017), perhaps only to be replaced by another form of impaired driving: the use of cell phones. College students are also more likely than their peers to use cell phones while driving, which is another behavior that sharply increases the risk of a crash (Cramer, Mayer, & Ryan, 2007). In the United States, the percentage of traffic fatalities due to such distracted driving nearly doubled from 2005 to 2009 (USCB, 2011)!

Failure to use seat belts also contributes to the injury and death rate for automobile crashes; unrestrained drivers are five times more likely to be injured than those using restraints (Bustamante et al., 2007). A substantial difference appears for male and female college students in driving-related risks. College men and women are equally as likely to report using seat belts (ACHA, 2016). However, women are more likely to use cell phones while driving (Cramer et al., 2007).

College students are also victims (and perpetrators) of intentional violence—including assaults,

robberies, rapes, and murders—but at a lower rate than nonstudents of comparable age (Carr, 2007). Crime rates in general have decreased in the United States, and that trend has also appeared on college campuses; only about one-fourth of campus injuries are the result of intentional violence. However, many campus crimes go unreported, and people fail to report sexual and partner violence more often than they report these acts of violence.

Three percent of college women and 1% of college men have been raped within the past school year (ACHA, 2020); nearly twice as many women report being the target of an attempted rape. These percentages are small but represent thousands of people per year. In addition, the percentage is cumulative; by the end of college life, the chance of a college woman experiencing a rape or attempted rape is more than 20% (Carr, 2007). Unwanted sexual touching and threats are much more common. Sexual victimization relates to a variety of health risks for women, including smoking, drug use, thoughts of suicide, and eating disorders (Gidycz et al., 2008). Thus, sexual violence can initiate a cascade of health problems.



The Image Bank/Getty Images

Automobile crashes are the leading cause of fatal injuries for adolescents and young adults in the United States.

Dating violence is also a common experience during college, although emotionally abusive relationships are much more common (10% within the past year) than physically abusive ones (3% within the past year) (ACHA, 2020). Women who are involved in physically abusive relationships are at increased risk for sexual violence and for victimization by a stalker, a form of victimization that is more common among college students than other groups. However, both women and men are perpetrators as well as victims of dating violence. A large, international study of dating violence (Straus, 2008) revealed that women are almost as likely as men to initiate dating violence. Couples in which one partner is more dominant than the other are at increased risk for violent behavior.

Suicide and suicide attempts are other forms of intentional violence that occur among college students. About 8% of college women and men have seriously considered suicide within the past school year (ACHA, 2020); 2% had attempted suicide within that time span. Feelings of hopelessness and depression; involvement in an abusive relationship; and being lesbian, gay, or bisexual increase the risk for suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts (Carr, 2007). As Joetta Carr (2007) commented, “Some campus violence is a reflection of society’s sexism, racism, and homophobia” (p. 311). Drinking, drug use, and mental health problems magnify the risks for all types of campus violence. However, college campuses are safer environments than most places, and students are safer on campus than in most communities.

Lifestyle Choices Although young adulthood presents hazards due to intentional and unintentional violence, it is also a time during which individuals adopt health-related behaviors that influence their health for decades. These health behaviors contribute to the risks for the leading causes of death during middle age and later. Dwayne and Robyn exhibit both risky and protective health behaviors, the most important of which is their status as nonsmokers. Choosing to be a nonsmoker is typical of college students; a lower percentage of college students smoke than of those who have not attended college (Wetter et al., 2005). Indeed, education is currently the best predictor of smoking status. Thus, it may not be surprising that individuals with a college education live longer and experience better health than others. However, e-cigarette usage has increased among high school students and college students, particularly among males (Lanza, Russell, & Braymiller, 2017).

Although the health risks of e-cigarettes remain unclear, college students who use e-cigarettes are more likely to take up traditional cigarettes (Spindle et al., 2017), so abstaining from e-cigarettes may be a wise choice.

Dwayne’s abstention from alcohol and Robyn’s social drinking are patterns that appear among college students, but many students choose less wisely and engage in binge drinking. Binge drinking represents the most dangerous pattern of drinking among young people. Such behavior can bring many health problems, and almost 3% of college students report that drinking interfered with their academic performance (ACHA, 2020). Even occasional binge drinking is risky because of its association with injury and violence. Over 40% of those between ages 18 and 25 engage in binge drinking, and college students are more likely than others to do so (ACHA, 2020).

College students often fail to eat healthily. When students begin college, they often enter a new living situation in which they make dietary choices rather than eat at home. A study of college students in Greece (Papadaki et al., 2007) found that students who moved away from home tended to change their diet to less healthy choices that included more sugar, alcohol, and fast food. Those who continued to live at home made few changes. Like Dwayne, few college students in the United States meet the guidelines for fruit and vegetable consumption (Adams & Colner, 2008). Like Robyn, those who do tend to adhere to other healthy behaviors, including using seat belts, engaging in physical activity, and sleeping well, along with decreased chances of smoking and driving after drinking.

College students are less likely than the general population to be overweight and more likely to engage in physical exercise; yet significant percentages of students fall short of those health goals. One study of eating, weight, and physical activity among college students (Burke et al., 2007) indicated that 33% of male and 22% of female college students were overweight; 11% and 7% were obese. A third of the women and 23% of the men accumulated less than 30 minutes of physical activity per day. As we would expect, these students had elevated cholesterol and blood pressure, laying the foundations for cardiovascular disease. Neither Dwayne nor Robyn is overweight, but Dwayne’s diet and lack of exercise put him at greater risk for high cholesterol and high blood pressure than Robyn, who does not want to repeat her grandfather’s experience with heart disease.

College students also encounter stress, with a majority reporting more than average or a tremendous amount of stress (ACHA, 2020). Robyn's rating of her stress is more typical than Dwayne's rating, which was very low. Most college students report many more sources of stress, which is the most frequently named reason for academic problems (ACHA, 2020). Thus, stress is a major challenge for college students, but developing problem-focused strategies to manage stress is important (Largo-Wight, Peterson, & Chen, 2005). Indeed, college students can lead healthy lives during their college years by cultivating a healthy lifestyle, and these habits provide the basis for a longer life as well as a healthier one.

What Can You Do to Cultivate a Healthy Lifestyle?

Health psychologists and other health researchers generate a massive amount of information about health and health-related behaviors. Electronic media, including television and the Internet, inundate people with health information; some of this information may come from valid sources, but some may not. People are often confused by what they perceive as an overwhelming amount of information, which even seems contradictory at times (Kickbusch, 2008). Evaluating all the information and translating it into personal terms is a substantial task, which requires *health literacy*—the ability to read and understand health information to make health decisions. This ability is related, of course, to literacy in general but goes further to include an understanding and evaluation of scientific information related to health (White, Chen, & Atchison, 2008; Zarcadoolas, Pleasant, & Greer, 2005).

Increase Your Health Literacy Despite their educational level, college students do not necessarily have a high degree of health literacy. They actively seek health information but tend to consult friends and family rather than more expert sources (Baxter, Egbert, & Ho, 2008). To increase your health literacy, begin to evaluate health claims critically, considering the source of the claim (Chapter 2 presents useful tips for evaluating the trustworthiness of information on the Internet). Expertise matters, so listen to the experts. Health research has produced a large body of evidence that allows health researchers to make recommendations. The massive research findings from health psychology represent an authoritative source, with recommendations on

smoking, drinking alcohol, eating a healthy diet, exercising, decreasing the risk of unintentional injury, and managing stress.

Adopt Good Health Behaviors—Now One way to summarize the recommendations from health research is to work toward integrating the findings from the Alameda County study into your life. Recall from Chapter 2 that this study identified five behaviors that led to better health and lower mortality (Belloc, 1973; Berkman & Breslow, 1983): (1) refraining from smoking cigarettes, (2) engaging in regular physical exercise, (3) drinking alcohol in moderation or not at all, (4) maintaining a healthy weight, and (5) sleeping seven to eight hours per night.

Of these habits, avoiding tobacco is probably the most important health behavior you can adopt, as it is the health behavior most strongly linked to longevity (Ford et al., 2012; Ford et al., 2011). The damage from tobacco takes years to become apparent, but smoking cigarettes and exposure to secondhand smoke are both hazardous. The evidence is also overwhelming concerning the benefits of adopting an active lifestyle. For individuals of any age, physical activity boosts health and prevents disease and disability. Physical activity can also improve cognitive functioning, mood, and learning—outcomes that may be more immediate than long-term health benefits. These two health habits are more important for long-term health benefits than for immediate ones, but nonsmokers who exercise regularly experience short-term health advantages as well as longer life expectancies.



Alcohol is a significant contributor to motor vehicle crashes, and college students are more likely than others to binge drink.

Andy Dean Photography/Shutterstock.com

Moderating alcohol intake is also an important health behavior. Light drinkers are healthier than those who drink more, and probably than those who do not drink at all. However, these findings apply to older adults more strongly than to younger ones. For college students, light drinking can often turn into binge drinking, which presents many serious risks to college students. Thus, good advice for college students is to work toward moderating drinking and avoiding the hazards of mixing alcohol and motor vehicles. Also, alcohol increases the risk of all types of violence, which is the leading cause of death for young adults. Avoiding heavy or binge drinking is the wise choice for college students.

Maintaining a healthy weight is important, but so are food choices. The foundation for cardiovascular disease begins during adolescence and young adulthood, and food choices are important. A high-fat diet is a component in this process. Even if you are able to maintain close to an ideal weight while eating a high-fat diet (as Dwayne was), this choice is a bad one. Strong evidence shows that a diet with lots of fruits and vegetables provides many health benefits. Choosing such a diet while balancing work, school, and personal demands is not an easy task but will lead to short-term benefits through weight maintenance and long-term advantages through decreasing the risks for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer. How much do these health habits matter? People who do not smoke, get adequate physical activity, moderate their alcohol consumption, and keep a healthy diet can benefit from an estimated *14 more years of life* than those who do not practice these four behaviors (Khaw et al., 2008)!

The fifth recommendation from the Alameda County study may be the most difficult for college students to follow: Get seven to eight hours of sleep a night. Only 5% of college students say they always get enough sleep, so they feel rested when they wake up, and most college students only feel rested three out of seven days of the week (ACHA, 2016). People who sleep more than 8 or less than six hours per night experience higher death rates than those who get seven to eight hours of sleep (Patel et al., 2004). Setting a priority on sleep may be difficult but will also pay off immediately in terms of energy, concentration, and perhaps even improved immune function (Motivala & Irwin, 2007).

A final recommendation from the Alameda County study emphasized the importance of social support (Camacho & Wiley, 1983; Wiley & Camacho, 1980). People with a social network are healthier than those with few social contacts. College students have

many opportunities to form a social network of friends, which they may add to their families as sources of social support. Remember that social support provides one type of coping strategy, but it is wise to cultivate a range of such strategies, including problem-focused as well as emotion-focused strategies, and use them appropriately.

The combination of these health behaviors will extend your life and improve your health, not only in the future but also during your college years. We (Linda, Jess, and John) sincerely wish you a healthy and happy future.

IN SUMMARY

Improving the health of college students requires understanding the risks specific to this group and finding ways to diminish those risks, including changes in their health-related behaviors. Injuries from intentional and unintentional violence are major health threats to young adults, including college students. Vehicle crashes are the most common threat, but injuries and deaths occur because of assault, rape, partner violence, suicide, and homicide. Alcohol is a factor in all those types of violence.

Health habits adopted during young adulthood lay the foundation for health or disease in later years. To make healthy choices, individuals need to develop their health literacy so that they can evaluate the health information that they receive from others and from the media. A good guideline for cultivating a healthy lifestyle comes from the Alameda County study, which found that people are healthier and live longer if they (1) refrain from smoking cigarettes, (2) engage in physical activity regularly, (3) drink alcohol in moderation or not at all, (4) maintain a healthy weight, and (5) sleep seven to eight hours per night. In addition, developing a social support network enhances health.

APPLY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED

1. Think about your own behaviors and health risks. What are things you do that are likely to keep you healthy? What are things that you do that may put your health at risk, either now or in the future? Write down steps you can take to maintain your healthy habits and reduce any unhealthy habits.

Questions

This chapter has addressed three basic questions:

1. What role does health psychology play in contributing to the goals of *Healthy People 2030*?

Health psychology is one of several disciplines that have a role in helping the nation achieve the goals and objectives of *Healthy People 2030*. Two broad goals of this document are (1) increasing the span of healthy life and (2) eliminating health disparities among various ethnic groups. Health psychologists emphasize adding healthy years of life, not merely more years. They cooperate with other health professionals in understanding and reducing health discrepancies among different ethnic groups, but this goal has proven difficult to accomplish.

2. What is the outlook for the future of health psychology?

Health psychology faces challenges in the 21st century. Finding ways to control health care costs is a major goal for all health care providers. Health psychologists can contribute to that goal through their expertise in understanding and treating the chronic diseases that have become the leading causes of death in industrialized countries. Even more important, health psychologists have advocated for prevention, which has the potential to decrease the need for health care. Prevention through behavior change can help in controlling health care costs. To be included in future health care, health psychologists must continue to add to both the research and practice components of the field: Build a research base and develop more effective strategies for behavior change.

3. How can you use health psychology to cultivate a healthier lifestyle?

The habits that you adopt during young adulthood form a foundation for your health-related behavior throughout middle and older adulthood, so the choices you make now are important for your future health. Health psychology offers suggestions concerning how to cultivate healthy choices in terms of smoking, drinking and drug use, diet, exercise, and stress management. Increasing your health literacy and relying on research rather than information from the media or from friends provide a strategy for making good health choices.

Suggested Readings

- Kickbusch, I. (2008). Health literacy: An essential skill for the twenty-first century. *Health Education, 108*, 101–104. This article examines the challenges to developing health literacy and emphasizes the importance of doing so considering the ever-increasing complexity of health research.
- Mongan, J. J., Ferris, T. G., & Lee, T. H. (2008). Options for slowing the growth of health care costs. *New England Journal of Medicine, 358*, 1509–1514. This recent article examines some possibilities for controlling health care costs without a drastic overhaul of the U.S. health care system.
- Whitfield, K. E., Weidner, G., Clark, R., & Anderson, N. B. (2002). Sociodemographic diversity in behavioral medicine. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 70*, 463–481. Keith Whitfield and his colleagues provide a comprehensive review of ethnic, gender, and economic factors that affect health and life expectancy, analyzing the risks and protective factors associated with each demographic group.

GLOSSARY

- A-beta fibers** Large sensory fibers involved in rapidly transmitting sensation and possibly inhibiting the transmission of pain. (Chapter 7)
- absolute risk** A person's chances of developing a disease or disorder that are independent of any risk that other people may have for that disease or disorder. (Chapter 2)
- abstinence violation effect** Feelings of guilt and loss of control often experienced after a person lapses into an unhealthy habit after a period of abstinence. (Chapters 12, 15)
- acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)** A type of therapy that teaches people to notice and accept unwanted thoughts and feelings while also committing to valued goals and activities. (Chapter 7)
- acetylcholine** One of the major neurotransmitters of the autonomic nervous system. (Chapter 5)
- acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)** An immune deficiency caused by viral infection resulting in vulnerability to a wide range of bacterial, viral, and malignant diseases. (Chapter 6)
- acrolein** A yellowish or colorless pungent liquid produced as a by-product of tobacco smoke; one of the aldehydes. (Chapter 12)
- acupressure** The application of pressure rather than needles to the points used in acupuncture. (Chapter 8)
- acupuncture** An ancient Chinese form of analgesia consisting of inserting needles into specific points on the skin and continuously stimulating the needles. (Chapter 8)
- acute pain** Short-term pain resulting from tissue damage or other trauma. (Chapter 7)
- addiction** Dependence on a drug in such a manner that stopping its use results in withdrawal symptoms. (Chapter 13)
- A-delta fibers** Small sensory fibers involved in the experience of "fast" pain. (Chapter 7)
- adherence** A patient's ability and willingness to follow recommended health practices. (Chapter 4)
- adrenal cortex** The outer layer of the adrenal glands; secretes glucocorticoids. (Chapter 5)
- adrenal glands** Endocrine glands—located on top of each kidney—that secrete hormones and affect metabolism. (Chapter 5)
- adrenal medulla** The inner layer of the adrenal glands; secretes epinephrine and norepinephrine. (Chapter 5)
- adrenocortical response** The response of the adrenal cortex, prompted by ACTH, that results in the release of glucocorticoids, including cortisol. (Chapter 5)
- adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH)** A hormone produced by the anterior portion of the pituitary gland that acts on the adrenal gland and is involved in the stress response. (Chapter 5)
- adrenomedullary response** The response of the adrenal medulla, prompted by sympathetic nervous system activation, resulting in the release of epinephrine. (Chapter 5)
- aerobic exercises** Exercises that require an increased amount of oxygen consumption over an extended period of time. (Chapter 15)
- afferent neurons** Sensory neurons that relay information from the sense organs toward the brain. (Chapter 7)
- alarm reaction** The first stage of the general adaptation syndrome (GAS), in which the body's defenses are mobilized against a stressor. (Chapter 5)
- alcohol dehydrogenase** A liver enzyme that metabolizes alcohol into aldehyde. (Chapter 13)
- aldehyde dehydrogenase** An enzyme that converts aldehyde into acetic acid. (Chapter 13)
- aldehydes** A class of organic compounds obtained from alcohol by oxidation and found in cigarette smoke; they cause mutations and are related to the development of cancer. (Chapter 12)
- alkalosis** An abnormally high level of alkaline in the body. (Chapter 14)
- allergies** Immune system responses characterized by an abnormal reaction to a foreign substance. (Chapter 6)
- allostasis** The concept that different circumstances require different levels of physiological activation. (Chapter 5)
- allostatic load** The term referring to the "wear and tear" of the body due to prolonged activation of physiological stress responses. (Chapter 5)
- alternative medicine** A group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not currently considered part of conventional medicine and are used as alternatives to conventional treatment. (Chapter 8)
- amphetamines** One type of stimulant drug. (Chapter 13)
- anabolic steroids** Steroid drugs that increase muscle bulk and decrease body fat but also have toxic effects. (Chapter 13)
- anaerobic exercises** Exercises that require short, intensive bursts of energy but do not require an increased amount of oxygen use. (Chapter 15)
- analgesic drugs** Drugs that decrease the perception of pain. (Chapter 7)
- anemia** A low level of red blood cells, leading to generalized weakness and lack of vitality. (Chapter 14)
- angina pectoris** A disorder involving a restricted blood supply to the myocardium, which results in chest pain and restricted breathing. (Chapter 9)
- anorexia nervosa** An eating disorder characterized by intentional starvation, distorted body image, excessive amounts of energy, and an intense fear of gaining weight. (Chapter 14)
- antibodies** Protein substances produced in response to a specific invader or antigen, marking it for destruction and thus creating immunity to that invader. (Chapter 6)
- antigens** Substances that provoke the immune system to produce antibodies. (Chapter 6)
- anus** Opening through which feces are eliminated. (Chapter 14)
- arteries** Vessels carrying blood away from the heart. (Chapter 9)
- arterioles** Small branches of an artery. (Chapter 9)
- arteriosclerosis** A condition marked by loss of elasticity and hardening of arteries. (Chapter 9)
- asthma** A chronic disease that causes constriction of the bronchial tubes, preventing air from passing freely and causing wheezing and difficulty breathing during attacks. (Chapters 6, 11)
- atheromatous plaques** Deposits of cholesterol and other lipids, connective tissue, and muscle tissue. (Chapter 9)
- atherosclerosis** The formation of plaque within the arteries. (Chapter 9)
- autoimmune diseases** Disorders that occur because of the immune system's failure to differentiate between body cells and foreign cells, resulting in the body's attack and destruction of its own cells. (Chapter 6)
- autonomic nervous system (ANS)** The part of the peripheral nervous system that primarily serves internal organs. (Chapter 5)
- aversion therapy** A type of behavioral therapy based on classical conditioning techniques that uses some aversive stimulus to countercondition the patient's response. (Chapter 13)
- Ayurveda** A system of medicine that originated in India more than 2,000 years ago; it emphasizes the attainment of health through balance and connection with all things in the universe. (Chapter 8)
- B-cells** The type of lymphocytes that attacks invading microorganisms. (Chapter 6)
- behavior modification** Shaping behavior by manipulating reinforcement to obtain a desired behavior. (Chapter 7)
- behavioral medicine** An interdisciplinary field concerned with developing and integrating behavioral and biomedical sciences. (Chapter 1)
- behavioral willingness** A person's motivation in a given situation to engage in a risky behavior, often as a reaction to social and situational pressures. (Chapter 4)
- benign** Limited in cell growth to a single tumor. (Chapter 10)
- beta-carotene** A form of vitamin A found in abundance in vegetables such as carrots and sweet potatoes. (Chapter 10)
- bile salts** Salts produced in the liver and stored in the gall bladder that aid in digestion of fats. (Chapter 14)

- biofeedback** The process of providing feedback information about the status of a biological system to that system. (Chapter 8)
- biomedical model** A perspective that considers disease to result from exposure to a specific disease-causing organism. (Chapter 1)
- biopsychosocial model** The approach to health that includes biological, psychological, and social influences. (Chapter 1)
- body mass index (BMI)** An estimate of obesity determined by body weight and height. (Chapter 14)
- bronchitis** Any inflammation of the bronchi. (Chapter 12)
- bulimia** An eating disorder characterized by periodic bingeing and purging, the latter usually taking the form of self-induced vomiting or laxative abuse. (Chapter 14)
- C fibers** Small-diameter nerve fibers that provide information concerning slow, diffuse, and lingering pain. (Chapter 7)
- cancer** A group of diseases characterized by the presence of new cells growing and spreading beyond control. (Chapter 10)
- capillaries** Very small vessels that connect arteries and veins. (Chapter 9)
- carcinogenic** Cancer-inducing. (Chapter 10)
- carcinomas** Cancers of the epithelial tissues. (Chapter 10)
- cardiac rehabilitation** A complex of approaches designed to restore heart patients to cardiovascular health. (Chapter 9)
- cardiologists** Medical doctors who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease. (Chapter 9)
- cardiovascular disease (CVD)** Disorders of the circulatory system, including coronary artery disease and stroke. (Chapter 9)
- cardiovascular reactivity (CVR)** An increase in blood pressure and heart rate as a reaction to frustration or harassment. (Chapter 9)
- cardiovascular system** The system of the body that includes the heart, arteries, and veins. (Chapter 9)
- case-control studies** Retrospective epidemiological studies in which people affected by a given disease (cases) are compared with others not affected (controls). (Chapter 2)
- catecholamines** A class of chemicals containing epinephrine and norepinephrine. (Chapter 5)
- catharsis** The spoken or written expression of strong negative emotions, which may result in improvement in physiological or psychological health. (Chapter 5)
- central control trigger** A nerve impulse that descends from the brain and influences the perception of pain. (Chapter 7)
- central nervous system (CNS)** All the neurons within the brain and spinal cord. (Chapter 5)
- cholecystokinin (CCK)** A peptide hormone released by the intestines that may be involved in feelings of satiation after eating. (Chapter 14)
- chronic diseases** Long-lasting diseases that can be controlled but not cured. (Chapters 1, 11)
- chronic pain** Pain that endures beyond the time of normal healing; frequently experienced in the absence of detectable tissue damage. (Chapter 7)
- chronic recurrent pain** Alternating episodes of intense pain and no pain. (Chapter 7)
- cirrhosis** A liver disease resulting in the production of nonfunctional scar tissue. (Chapter 13)
- clinical trial** A research design that tests the effects of medical treatment. Many clinical trials are randomized controlled trials that allow researchers to determine whether a new treatment is or is not effective. (Chapter 2)
- cluster headache** A type of severe headache that occurs in daily clusters for 4 to 16 weeks. Symptoms are similar to migraine, but the duration is much briefer. (Chapter 7)
- cocaine** A stimulant drug extracted from the coca plant. (Chapter 13)
- cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** A type of therapy that aims to develop beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, and skills to make positive changes in behavior. (Chapters 5, 7)
- cognitive therapy** A type of therapy that aims to change attitudes and beliefs, assuming that behavior change will follow. (Chapter 7)
- complementary medicine** A group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices, and products that are not currently considered part of conventional medicine and are used in addition to conventional techniques. (Chapter 8)
- conscientiousness** A personality trait marked by a tendency to be planful and goal-oriented, to delay gratification, and to follow norms and rules. (Chapter 4)
- continuum theories** Theories that explain adherence with a single set of factors that should apply equally to all people. (Chapter 4)
- control group** In an experiment or clinical trial, the group of participants who do not receive an active treatment. The control group serves as a comparison to the experimental group. (Chapter 2)
- coping** Strategies that individuals use to manage the distressing problems and emotions in their lives. (Chapter 5)
- coronary artery disease (CAD)** A disorder of the myocardium arising from atherosclerosis and/or arteriosclerosis. (Chapter 9)
- coronary heart disease (CHD)** Any damage to the myocardium resulting from an insufficient blood supply. (Chapter 9)
- correlation coefficient** Any positive or negative relationship between two variables. Correlational evidence cannot prove causation, but only that two variables vary together. (Chapter 2)
- correlational studies** Studies designed to yield information concerning the degree of relationship between two variables. (Chapter 2)
- cortisol** A type of glucocorticoid that provides a natural defense against inflammation and regulates carbohydrate metabolism. (Chapter 5)
- cross-sectional studies** Research designs in which subjects of different ages are studied at one point in time. (Chapter 2)
- cytokines** Chemical messengers secreted by cells in the immune system, forming a communication link between the nervous and immune systems. (Chapter 6)
- daily hassles** Everyday events that people experience as harmful, threatening, or annoying. (Chapter 5)
- delirium tremens** A condition induced by alcohol withdrawal and characterized by excessive trembling, sweating, anxiety, and hallucinations. (Chapter 13)
- dependence** A condition in which a drug becomes incorporated into the functioning of the body's cells so that it is needed for "normal" functioning. (Chapters 7, 13)
- dependent variable** In an experiment or clinical trial, the variable that represents the effect or outcome of interest. (Chapter 2)
- diabetes mellitus** A disorder caused by insulin deficiency. (Chapters 6, 11)
- diastolic pressure** A measure of blood pressure between contractions of the heart. (Chapter 9)
- diathesis-stress model** A theory of stress that suggests that some individuals are vulnerable to stress-related illnesses because they are genetically predisposed to those illnesses. (Chapter 6)
- disulfiram** A drug that causes an aversive reaction when taken with alcohol; used to treat alcoholism; Antabuse. (Chapter 13)
- dopamine** A neurotransmitter especially important in mediating the reward associated with taking psychoactive drugs. (Chapter 13)
- dorsal horns** The part of the spinal cord away from the stomach that receives sensory input and may play an important role in the perception of pain. (Chapter 7)
- dose-response relationship** A direct, consistent relationship between an independent variable, such as a behavior, and a dependent variable, such as an illness. For example, the greater the number of cigarettes one smokes, the greater the likelihood of lung cancer. (Chapter 2)
- double-blind design** An experimental design in which neither the subjects nor those who dispense the treatment condition have knowledge of who receives the treatment and who receives the placebo. (Chapter 2)
- eating disorder** Any serious and habitual disturbance in eating behavior that produces unhealthy consequences. (Chapter 14)
- e-cigarettes** Handheld electronic devices wherein a heating element vaporizes a liquid mixture that users inhale; also known as electronic cigarettes. (Chapter 12)
- efferent neurons** Motor neurons that convey impulses away from the brain. (Chapter 7)
- electrolyte imbalance** A condition caused by loss of body minerals. (Chapter 14)

- electromyograph (EMG) biofeedback** Feedback that reflects activity of the skeletal muscles. (Chapter 8)
- electronic cigarettes** Handheld electronic devices wherein a heating element vaporizes a liquid mixture that users inhale. Electronic cigarettes are also known as e-cigarettes. (Chapter 12)
- emotional disclosure** A therapeutic technique whereby people express their strong emotions by talking or writing about the events that precipitated them. (Chapter 5)
- emotion-focused coping** Coping strategies oriented toward managing the emotions that accompany the perception of stress. (Chapter 5)
- emphysema** A chronic lung disease in which scar tissue and mucus obstruct the respiratory passages. (Chapter 12)
- endocrine system** The system of the body that consists of ductless glands. (Chapter 5)
- endorphins** Naturally occurring neurochemicals, the effects of which resemble those of the opiates. (Chapter 7)
- environmental tobacco smoke (ETS)** The smoke of spouses, parents, or coworkers to which nonsmokers are exposed; passive smoking. (Chapter 12)
- epidemiology** A branch of medicine that investigates the various factors that contribute either to positive health or to the frequency and distribution of a disease or disorder. (Chapter 2)
- epigenetics** A branch of genetics that studies the changes in the expression of genes through nongenetic mechanisms. (Chapter 13)
- epinephrine** A chemical manufactured by the adrenal medulla that accounts for much of the hormone production of the adrenal glands; sometimes called adrenalin. (Chapter 5)
- esophagus** The tube leading from the pharynx to the stomach. (Chapter 14)
- essential hypertension** Elevations of blood pressure that have no known cause. (Chapter 9)
- ethanol** The variety of alcohol used in beverages. (Chapter 13)
- ex post facto design** A scientific study in which the values of the independent variable are not manipulated but selected by the experimenter after the groups have naturally divided themselves. (Chapter 2)
- exhaustion stage** The final stage of the general adaptation syndrome (GAS) in which the body's ability to resist a stressor has been depleted. (Chapter 5)
- experimental group** In an experiment or clinical trial, the group of participants who receive an active treatment. (Chapter 2)
- feces** Any materials left over after digestion. (Chapter 14)
- fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)** A pattern of physical and psychological symptoms found in infants whose mothers drank heavily during pregnancy. (Chapter 13)
- fibromyalgia** A chronic pain condition characterized by tender points throughout the body; produces symptoms of fatigue, headache, cognitive difficulties, anxiety, and sleep disturbances. (Chapter 7)
- formaldehyde** A colorless, pungent gas found in cigarette smoke; causes irritation of the respiratory system and has been found to be carcinogenic; one of the aldehydes. (Chapter 12)
- gall bladder** The sac on the liver in which bile is stored. (Chapter 14)
- gastric juices** Stomach secretions that aid in digestion. (Chapter 14)
- gate control theory** A theory of pain holding that structures in the spinal cord act as a gate for sensory input that is interpreted as pain. (Chapter 7)
- ghrelin** A peptide hormone produced primarily in the stomach, the level of which rises before and falls after meals. (Chapter 14)
- glucagon** A hormone secreted by the pancreas that stimulates the release of glucose, thus elevating blood sugar level. (Chapter 11)
- granulocytes** A type of lymphocytes that acts rapidly to kill invading organisms. (Chapter 6)
- health disparity** A difference in a health condition that exists between specific population groups. (Chapter 16)
- health expectancy** The period of life that a person spends free from disability. (Chapter 16)
- health literacy** The ability to read and understand health information to make health decisions. (Chapter 16)
- health psychology** A field of psychology that contributes to both behavioral medicine and behavioral health; the scientific study of behaviors that relate to health enhancement, disease prevention, and rehabilitation. (Chapter 1)
- high-density lipoprotein (HDL)** A form of lipoprotein that confers some protection against coronary artery disease. (Chapter 9)
- hormones** Chemical substances released into the blood and having effects on other parts of the body. (Chapter 5)
- human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)** A virus that attacks the human immune system, depleting the body's ability to fight infection; the infection that causes AIDS. (Chapter 11)
- hydrocyanic acid** A poisonous acid produced by treating a cyanide with an acid; one of the products of cigarette smoke. (Chapter 12)
- hypertension** Abnormally high blood pressure, with either a systolic reading of more than 160 or a diastolic reading of more than 105. (Chapter 9)
- hypoglycemia** Deficiency of sugar in the blood. (Chapter 14)
- hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA)** A set of signals and relationships that exist among the hypothalamus, the pituitary gland, and the adrenal glands. (Chapter 5)
- hypothalamus** A small structure beneath the thalamus, involved in the control of eating, drinking, and emotional behavior. (Chapter 14)
- illness behavior** Those activities undertaken by people who feel ill and who wish to discover their state of health, as well as suitable remedies. Illness behavior precedes formal diagnosis. (Chapter 3)
- immunity** A response to foreign microorganisms that occurs with repeated exposure and results in resistance to a disease. (Chapter 6)
- implementational intentions** Detailed plans that link a specific situation with a goal that a person wants to achieve. (Chapter 4)
- incidence** A measure of the frequency of new cases of a disease or disorder during a specified period of time. (Chapter 2)
- independent variable** In an experiment or clinical trial, the variable that represents the presumed cause of an effect or outcome. (Chapter 2)
- induction** The process of being placed into a hypnotic state. (Chapter 8)
- inflammation** A general immune system response that works to restore damaged tissue. (Chapter 6)
- insulin** A hormone that enhances glucose intake to the cells. (Chapter 11)
- integrative medicine** The approach to treatment that attempts to integrate techniques from both conventional and alternative medicine. (Chapter 8)
- interneurons** Neurons that connect sensory neurons to motor neurons; association neurons. (Chapter 7)
- ischemia** Restriction of blood flow to tissue or organs; often used with reference to the heart. (Chapter 9)
- islet cells** The part of the pancreas that produces glucagon and insulin. (Chapter 11)
- isokinetic exercise** Exercise requiring exertion for lifting and additional effort for returning weight to the starting position. (Chapter 15)
- isometric exercise** Exercise performed by contracting muscles against an immovable object. (Chapter 15)
- isotonic exercise** Exercise that requires the contraction of muscles and the movement of joints, as in weight lifting. (Chapter 15)
- Kaposi's sarcoma** A malignancy characterized by multiple soft, dark blue or purple nodules on the skin, with hemorrhages. (Chapter 10)
- laminae** Layers of cell bodies. (Chapter 7)
- lay referral network** The network of family and friends from whom a person may first seek medical information and advice. (Chapter 3)
- leptin** A protein hormone produced by fat cells in the body that is related to eating and weight control. (Chapter 14)
- leukemias** Cancers originating in blood cells or blood-producing cells. (Chapter 10)
- life events** Major events in a person's life that require change or adaptation. (Chapter 5)

- life expectancy** The expected number of years of life that remain for a person of a given age. (Chapters 1, 16)
- lipoproteins** Substances in the blood consisting of lipid and protein. (Chapter 9)
- liver** The largest gland in the body; it aids digestion by producing bile, regulates organic components of the blood, and acts as a detoxifier of blood. (Chapter 14)
- longitudinal studies** Research designs in which one group of participants is studied over a period of time. (Chapter 2)
- low-density lipoprotein (LDL)** A form of lipoprotein found to be positively related to coronary artery disease. (Chapter 9)
- lymph node** Small nodules of lymphatic tissue spaced throughout the lymphatic system that help clean lymph of debris. (Chapter 6)
- lymph** Tissue fluid that has entered a lymphatic vessel. (Chapter 6)
- lymphatic system** System that transports lymph through the body. (Chapter 6)
- lymphocytes** A response to foreign microorganisms that occurs with repeated exposure and results in resistance to a disease. (Chapter 6)
- lymphoma** Cancer of the lymphoid tissues, including lymph nodes. (Chapter 10)
- macrophages** A type of lymphocytes that attacks invading organisms. (Chapter 6)
- malignant** Having the ability not only to grow but also to spread to other parts of the body. (Chapter 10)
- marijuana** A drug derived from the resin of the cannabis sativa plant. The effects of marijuana abuse include memory impairment, altered thought process, feelings of relaxation and euphoria, impaired coordination, and increased appetite. (Chapter 13)
- medulla** The structure of the hindbrain just above the spinal cord. (Chapter 7)
- meta-analysis** A statistical technique for combining results of several studies when these studies have similar definitions of variables. (Chapter 2)
- metastasis** To undergo metastasis, the spread of malignancy from one part of the body to another by way of the blood or lymph systems. (Chapter 10)
- migraine headaches** Recurrent headaches originally believed to be caused by constriction and dilation of the vascular arteries but now accepted as involving neurons in the brain stem. (Chapter 7)
- mindfulness** Quality of awareness that is brought about by focusing on the present moment and accepting the thoughts in a nonjudgmental manner. (Chapter 7)
- motivational interviewing** A therapeutic approach that originated within substance abuse treatment that attempts to change a client's motivation and prepares the client to enact changes in behavior. (Chapter 4)
- motivational phase** In the health action process approach, the stage in which a person develops an intention to pursue a health-related goal. (Chapter 4)
- myelin** A fatty substance that acts as insulation for neurons. (Chapter 7)
- myocardial infarction** Heart attack. (Chapter 9)
- myocardium** The heart muscle. (Chapter 9)
- natural killer (NK) cells** The type of lymphocytes that attacks invading organisms. (Chapter 6)
- negative reinforcement** Removing an unpleasant or negatively valued stimulus from a situation, thereby strengthening the behavior that precedes this removal. (Chapter 4)
- neoplastic** Characterized by new, abnormal growth of cells. (Chapter 10)
- neuroendocrine system** Those endocrine glands that are controlled by and interact with the nervous system. (Chapter 5)
- neurons** Nerve cells. (Chapter 5)
- neuroticism** A personality trait marked by a tendency to experience negative emotional states. (Chapter 3)
- neurotransmitters** Chemicals that are released by neurons and that affect the activity of other neurons. (Chapter 5)
- nitric oxide** A colorless gas prepared by the action of nitric acid on copper and produced in cigarette smoke; it affects oxygen metabolism and may be dangerous. (Chapter 12)
- nocebo effect** Adverse effect of a placebo. (Chapter 2)
- nociception** The process wherein sensory nerve cells are stimulated in response to harmful stimuli resulting in the perception of pain. (Chapter 7)
- nociceptors** Sensory receptors in the skin and organs that can respond to various types of stimulation that may cause tissue damage. (Chapter 7)
- non-Hodgkin's lymphoma** A malignancy characterized by rapidly growing tumors that are spread through the circulatory or lymphatic systems. (Chapter 10)
- nonnarcotic analgesics** Drugs that help in relieving pain without causing loss of consciousness and comprises of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and acetaminophen. (Chapter 7)
- norepinephrine** One of two major neurotransmitters of the autonomic nervous system. (Chapter 5)
- oncologists** Physicians who specialize in the treatment of cancer. (Chapter 10)
- opiate painkillers** Substances such as morphine, codeine, oxycodone, and hydrocodone that help relieve pain. (Chapter 7)
- optimistic bias** The belief that other people, but not oneself, will develop a disease, have an accident, or experience other negative events. (Chapters 4, 9, 12)
- optimists** People who have a positive outlook on life and expect good things to happen to them. (Chapter 5)
- osteoarthritis** Progressive inflammation of the joints. (Chapter 7)
- osteoporosis** A disease characterized by a reduction in bone density, brittleness of bones, and a loss of calcium from the bones. (Chapter 15)
- outcome expectations** The beliefs that carrying out a specific behavior will lead to valued outcomes. (Chapter 4)
- pancreas** An endocrine gland, located below the stomach, that produces digestive juices and hormones. (Chapter 11)
- pancreatic juices** Acid-reducing enzymes secreted by the pancreas into the small intestine. (Chapter 14)
- parasympathetic nervous system** A division of the autonomic nervous system that promotes relaxation and functions under normal, nonstressful conditions. (Chapter 5)
- passive smoking** The exposure of nonsmokers to the smoke of spouses, parents, or coworkers; environmental tobacco smoke. (Chapter 12)
- pathogen** Any disease-causing organism. (Chapter 1)
- periaqueductal gray** An area of the midbrain that, when stimulated, decreases pain. (Chapter 7)
- peripheral nervous system (PNS)** The nerves that lie outside the brain and spinal cord. (Chapter 5)
- peristalsis** Contractions that propel food through the digestive tract. (Chapter 14)
- personal control** Confidence that people have in their ability to control the events that shape their lives. (Chapter 5)
- phagocytosis** The process of engulfing and killing foreign particles. (Chapter 6)
- phantom limb pain** The experience of chronic pain in an absent body part. (Chapter 7)
- pharynx** Part of the digestive tract between the mouth and the esophagus. (Chapter 14)
- pituitary gland** An endocrine gland that lies within the brain and whose secretions regulate many other glands. (Chapter 5)
- placebo** An inactive substance or condition that has the appearance of an active treatment and that may cause improvement or change because of people's belief in the placebo's efficacy. (Chapter 2)
- plasma cells** Cells, derived from B-cells, that secrete antibodies. (Chapter 6)
- population density** A physical condition in which a large population occupies a limited space. (Chapter 5)
- positive reinforcement** Adding a positively valued stimulus to a situation, thereby strengthening the behavior it follows. (Chapter 4)
- positive reinforcers** Positively valued stimuli that, when added to a situation, strengthens the behavior it follows. (Chapter 7)
- posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** An anxiety disorder caused by experience with an extremely traumatic event and characterized by recurrent and intrusive reexperiencing of the event. (Chapters 5, 6)

- prechronic pain** Pain that endures beyond the acute phase but has not yet become chronic. (Chapter 7)
- prevalence** The proportion of a population that has a disease or disorder at a specific point in time. (Chapter 2)
- primary afferents** Sensory neurons that convey impulses from the skin to the spinal cord. (Chapter 7)
- primary appraisal** One's initial appraisal of a potentially stressful event (Lazarus and Folkman). (Chapter 5)
- problem-focused coping** Coping strategies aimed at changing the source of the stress. (Chapter 5)
- proinflammatory cytokine** A chemical secreted by the immune system that promotes inflammation; associated with feelings of sickness, depression, and social withdrawal. (Chapter 6)
- prospective studies** Longitudinal studies that begin with a disease-free group of subjects and follow the occurrence of disease in that population or sample. (Chapter 2)
- psychoneuroimmunology (PNI)** A multidisciplinary field that focuses on the interactions among behavior, the nervous system, the endocrine system, and the immune system. (Chapter 6)
- punishment** The presentation of an aversive stimulus or the removal of a positive one. Punishment sometimes, but not always, weakens a response. (Chapter 4)
- Raynaud's disease** A vasoconstrictive disorder characterized by inadequate circulation in the extremities, especially the fingers or toes, resulting in pain. (Chapter 8)
- reappraisal** One's nearly constant reevaluation of stressful events (Lazarus and Folkman). (Chapter 5)
- reciprocal determinism** Bandura's model that includes environment, behavior, and person as mutually interacting factors. (Chapter 4)
- rectum** The end of the digestive tract leading to the anus. (Chapter 14)
- referred pain** Pain perceived at a place that is different from the place of the stimulus. Visceral pain is often *referred* to sites on the skin. (Chapter 7)
- relative risk** The risk a person has for a particular disease compared with the risk of other people who do not have that person's condition or lifestyle. (Chapter 2)
- reliability** The extent to which a test or other measuring instrument yields consistent results. (Chapter 2)
- resistance stage** The second stage of the general adaptation syndrome (GAS) in which the body adapts to a stressor. (Chapter 5)
- retrospective studies** Longitudinal studies that look back at the history of a population or sample. (Chapter 2)
- rheumatoid arthritis** An autoimmune disorder characterized by a dull ache within or around a joint. (Chapters 6, 7)
- risk factor** Any characteristic or condition that occurs with greater frequency in people with a disease than it does in people free from that disease. (Chapter 2)
- salivary glands** Glands that furnish moisture that helps in tasting and digesting food. (Chapter 14)
- sarcomas** Cancers of the connective tissues. (Chapter 10)
- secondary appraisal** One's perceived ability to control or cope with harm, threat, or challenge (Lazarus and Folkman). (Chapter 5)
- sedatives** Drugs that induce relaxation and sometimes intoxication by lowering the activity of the brain, the neurons, the muscles, the heart, and even by slowing the metabolic rate. (Chapter 13)
- selenium** A trace element found in grain products and in meat from grain-fed animals. (Chapter 10)
- self-efficacy** The belief that one can perform the behaviors that will produce desired outcomes in any particular situation. (Chapter 4)
- self-selection** A condition of an experimental investigation in which subjects are allowed, in some manner, to determine their own placement in either the experimental or the control group. (Chapter 2)
- set-point** A hypothetical ratio of fat to lean tissue at which a person's weight will tend to stabilize. (Chapter 14)
- sick role behavior** Those activities undertaken by people who have been diagnosed as sick that are directed at getting well. (Chapter 3)
- single-blind design** A design in which the participants do not know if they are receiving the active or inactive treatment, but the providers are not blind to treatment conditions. (Chapter 2)
- social contacts** Number and kinds of people with whom one associates; members of one's social network. (Chapter 5)
- social isolation** The absence of specific role relationships. (Chapter 5)
- social network** The number and kinds of people with whom one associates; social contacts. (Chapter 5)
- social support** Both tangible and intangible support a person receives from other people. (Chapters 4, 5, 7)
- somatic nervous system** The part of the PNS that serves the skin and voluntary muscles. (Chapter 5)
- somatosensory cortex** The part of the brain that receives and processes sensory input from the body. (Chapter 7)
- spleen** A large organ near the stomach that serves as a repository for lymphocytes and red blood cells. (Chapter 6)
- spontaneous remission** Disappearance of problem behavior or illness without treatment. (Chapter 13)
- stage theories** Theories that propose that people pass through discrete stages as they attempt to change a health behavior. Stage theories propose that different factors become important at different times, depending on a person's stage. (Chapter 4)
- state anxiety** A temporary condition of dread or uneasiness stemming from a specific situation. (Chapter 15)
- stimulants** Psychoactive drugs such as cocaine, amphetamines, nicotine, and caffeine that tend to elevate mood, arouse action, reduce feelings of fatigue, and decrease appetite. (Chapter 13)
- subject variable** A variable chosen (rather than manipulated) by a researcher to provide levels of comparison for groups of subjects. (Chapter 2)
- substantia gelatinosa** Two layers of the dorsal horns of the spinal cord. (Chapter 7)
- sympathetic nervous system** A division of the autonomic nervous system that mobilizes the body's resources in emergency, stressful, and emotional situations. (Chapter 5)
- synaptic cleft** The space between neurons. (Chapter 5)
- syndrome** A cluster of symptoms that characterize a particular condition. (Chapter 7)
- synergistic effect** The combined effect of two or more variables that exceeds the sum of their individual effects. (Chapter 10)
- systolic pressure** A measure of blood pressure generated by the heart's contraction. (Chapter 9)
- T-cells** The cells of the immune system that produce immunity. (Chapter 6)
- telomere** A region at the end of a chromosome where repetitive nucleotide sequences appear acting as a protective cap and preventing chromosomes from deterioration. (Chapter 6)
- tension headaches** Pain produced by sustained muscle contractions in the neck, shoulders, scalp, and face, as well as by activity in the central nervous system. (Chapter 7)
- thalamus** Structure in the forebrain that acts as a relay center for incoming sensory information and outgoing motor information. (Chapter 7)
- theory** A set of related assumptions from which testable hypotheses can be drawn. (Chapter 2)
- thermal biofeedback** Feedback concerning changes in skin temperature. (Chapter 8)
- thermistor** A temperature-sensitive resistor used in thermal biofeedback. (Chapter 8)
- thymosin** A hormone produced by the thymus. (Chapter 6)
- thymus** An organ located near the heart that secretes thymosin and thus processes and activates T-cells. (Chapter 6)
- tolerance** The need for increasing levels of a drug to produce a constant level of effect. (Chapters 7, 13)
- tonsils** Masses of lymphatic tissue located in the pharynx. (Chapter 6)

trait anxiety A personality characteristic that manifests itself as a more-or-less-constant feeling of dread or uneasiness. (Chapter 15)

transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) Treatment for pain involving electrical stimulation of neurons from the surface of the skin. (Chapter 7)

triglycerides A group of molecules consisting of glycerol and three fatty acids; one of the components of serum lipids that has been implicated in the formation of atherosclerotic plaque. (Chapter 9)

urban press The many environmental stressors that affect city living, including noise, crowding, crime, and pollution. (Chapter 5)

validity Accuracy; the extent to which a test or other measuring instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. (Chapter 2)

veins Vessels that carry blood to the heart. (Chapter 9)

venules The smallest veins. (Chapter 9)

volitional phase In the health action process approach, the stage in which a person pursues a health-related goal. (Chapter 4)

well-year The equivalent of a year of complete wellness. (Chapter 16)

withdrawal Adverse physiological reactions exhibited when a drug-dependent person stops using that drug; the withdrawal symptoms are typically unpleasant and opposite to the drug's effects. (Chapter 13)

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NAME INDEX

A

- Aaronson, N. K., 277
Aarts, H., 378
Abate, D., 430
Abate, K. H., 430
Abay, S. M., 430
Abba, K., 89
Abbafati, C., 430
Abbara, A., 139
Abbasi, A., 380
Abbasi, N., 430
Abbastabar, H., 430
Abbey, A., 344
Abbott, R. B., 207, 211
Abdela, J., 430
Abdelalim, A., 430
Abdollahpour, I., 430
Abdulkader, R. S., 430
Abebe, M., 430
Abebe, Z., 430
Abil, O. Z., 430
Abiona, T. C., 297
Abi-Saleh, B., 224, 236
Abnet, C. C., 262
Abohashem, S., 240
Aboyans, V., 430
Abraham, C., 88
Abrahamowicz, M., 331
Abrahamsson, H., 46, 49, 51, 55
Abrahan, I., 217
Abrams, K. R., 288
Abrams, M., 206, 392
Abrams, P., 47
Abrham, A. R., 430
Abubakar, I., 97
Aburad, L., 386
Abu-Raddad, L. J., 430
Abu-Rmeileh, N. M. E., 430
Ackard, D. M., 416, 417
Ackerman, M. D., 441
Ackloo, E., 89
Ackroff, L., 378
Acree, M., 118, 298
Adam, E. K., 147
Adam, F., 287, 376
Adam, V., 202
Adams, B., 119
Adams, C., 320
Adams, J., 202, 203
Adams, S. M., 342
Adams, T. B., 444
Adamsen, L., 408, 416
Adamson, J., 48
Addou, E., 236
Addy, C. L., 417
Ader, R., 136
Ader, R., 14
Aderman, D., 300
Ades, J., 390
Adler, N. E., 8, 142
Adler, N., 57
Adrian, J., 280
Advokat, C., 177, 178, 179
Advokat, C. D., 357, 358, 363
Afari, N., 395
Affleck, G., 116, 148, 350
Afonso, A. M., 262
Agardh, E., 285
Agari, I., 149
Agboola, S., 327
Ager, J., 343
Agid, O., 23
Agras, W. S., 391
Agrawal, A., 115, 314
Aharonovich, E. A., 107
Ahlstrom, B., 152
Ahmed, S. H., 362
Ahrens, A. H., 375
Aiken, L. S., 76
Ainsworth, B. E., 417, 423
Aitken, J. F., 277
Ajani, U. A., 230, 231
Ajzen, I., 76
Akal, S., 432
Akazawa, T., 301
Akechi, T., 301
Akinbami, L. J., 289
Al, Stoyanoff, S. R., 295
Alaejos, M. S., 262
Alamian, A., 234, 235, 236
Alarcon, F., 170–171
Alavanja, M., 259
Albanes, D., 28, 30, 407, 415
Albanesi, M., 207
Alberga, A. S., 47, 49
Albers, J. J., 403, 414
Albert, C. M., 418
Albrecht, T. L., 74
Aldana, S. G., 248
Al-Delaimy, W. K., 322
Alderson, D., 107
Aldridge, A. A., 270
Aldridge, R. W., 97
Alegria, M., 389
Alexander, C. M., 89
Alexander, F., 11, 13
Alexander, R., 326
Alfaddagh, A., 236
Alfaro, A., 209
Alger, B. E., 358
Alger, H. M., 238
Al-Hinai, A., 238
Allais, G., 207, 211
Allan, R., 246
Allard, S., 182, 183
Allebeck, P., 285
Allegrante, J. P., 58
Allen, G. J., 201
Allen, H., 56
Allen, J. G., 178
Allen, K., 117, 240
Allison, J. D., 413, 416
Allison, K. C., 393, 394
Almahmeed, W. A., 145, 240
Almedia, O. P., 412, 416
Almeida, D. M., 109
Aloe, L., 207
Alonso, S. A., 329
Aloufi, A. D., 375
Alper, C. M., 11, 144
Alper, J., 147
Alpert, B. S., 147
Al-Tayyib, A., 295
Altekruse, S., 267
Alter, D. A., 80, 403
Altman, D. G., 31
Altman, M., 385
Altmann, D. R., 238, 263
Alvarez Linera, J., 170
Amante, D. J., 53
Amantea, D., 170
Amanzio, M., 23
Amato, M. S., 326
Amato, P. R., 108
Ambroz, C., 176
Amelang, M., 267
Amentano, D. S., 72
Ames, D., 282
Amiano, P., 408, 415
Amico, R., 298
Amini, H., 237
Amireault, S., 422
Ammendolia, C., 211
Amsterdam, J. D., 23, 203
Amuta, A. O., 53, 55
An, Y., 288
Ana, M., 354
Anand, S., 238
Anan, S. S., 237
Anand, S. S., 233, 234, 244
Andel, R., 281
Andersson, B.-A., 320
Andersen, B. L., 271, 415
Andersen, C., 408, 416
Andersen, J., 107
Andersen, L. B., 407
Andersen, M. R., 315
Andersen, R. M., 216
Anderson, G. L., 28
Anderson, J. L., 236
Anderson, J. W., 383
Anderson, K. E., 266
Anderson, K. O., 172
Anderson, M. L., 206, 211
Anderson, N. B., 437
Anderson, P., 335
Anderson, R., 255

- Anderson, R. N., 260
 Anderson, W. F., 267
 Anderssen, S. A., 407
 Andersson, K., 72
 Andersson, R., 32
 Andrasik, F., 120, 143, 180
 Andreas, M. I., 362
 Andreassen, O. A., 362
 Andreasson, S., 345
 Andrew, M., 122, 123
 Andrews, J. A., 85
 Andrykowski, M. A., 271
 Aneiros, F. J., 182, 183
 Aneshensel, C. S., 283, 301
 Angeles, M., 354
 Aniridya, K. D., 244
 Anisman, H., 150
 Ankri, J., 150
 Annesi, J. J., 410, 416
 Ansary-Moghaddam, A., 286
 Anstey, K. J., 72
 Antall, G. F., 207, 211
 Anthony, D. C., 53
 Anthony, J. C., 141
 Antonak, R. F., 116, 277, 300
 Antoni, M. H., 72, 120–123, 139, 268–271, 298
 Antoni, M., 78, 122, 123
 Antoniou, A. C., 258
 Anttila, A., 267
 Apkarian, A. V., 160, 171
 Apolone, G., 172
 Appel, L. J., 238, 383, 385
 Appelbaum, K. A., 209
 Applebaum, A. J., 70
 Arakawa, T., 147
 Aramakis, V. B., 350
 Aranaga, N., 170–171
 Aranda, M. P., 119
 Arbisi, P. A., 175
 Arch, M., 348
 Ard, J. D., 383
 Ardanaz, E., 408, 415
 Arden, M. A., 83
 Arden, N. K., 380
 Ardern, C. I., 386
 Arendt, M., 205, 208
 Arias, E., 226, 230, 234, 319, 356
 Ariely, D., 23
 Armeli, S., 148, 350, 351
 Armes, J., 277
 Armitage, C. J., 77, 83, 87
 Armor, D. J., 354
 Armour, B. S., 35
 Armstrong, B., 27
 Armstrong, K., 203
 Armstrong, L., 45, 46, 48
 Arnaiz, J. A., 31
 Arnold, R., 276, 277
 Arntz, A., 164
 Aro, A. R., 267
 Aronson, M. D., 59
 Arrazola, R. A., 315
 Arroll, A., 57
 Arsand, E., 441
 Arshad, A., 324
 Arving, C., 277
 Ascherio, A., 286, 320, 406, 414
 Aschmann, H. E., 235, 244, 246
 Ashikaga, T., 316
 Ashley, M. J., 331
 Ashmore, J. P., 259
 Ashton, C. M., 25
 Ashton, W., 237
 Asman, K., 311
 Aspden, P., 59
 Aspinwall, L. G., 116
 Assaf, A. R., 28
 Assanand, S., 378
 Assendelft, W. J. J., 180
 Assendelft, W. J., 208
 Astell-Burt, T., 382
 Asthana, D., 78
 Astin, J. A., 180, 182, 183, 203
 Astrup, A., 286
 Atchison, R., 315, 445
 Athar, H., 431, 432
 Atherton, R. J., 182
 Atkinson, N. L., 53
 Attrep, J., 148
 Atwood, L. D., 377
 Aubin, H.-J., 355
 Audette, J. H., 207
 August, S., 298
 Aulet, S., 170–171
 Aune, D., 32
 Austad, C. S., 351
 Austin, B. P., 413, 416
 Averbuch, M., 166
 Aveyard, P., 326, 329
 Avezum, A., 145, 232, 234, 236, 239
 Avis, N., 316
 Avison, M. J., 379
 Avivi, Y. E., 240
 Avol, E., 290
 Avrahami, B., 357
 Awad, G. H., 298
 Awata, S., 280
 Axt, J. R., 174
 Ayas, N. T., 446
 Ayers, S. L., 202, 203, 206
 Aygul, R., 143
 Aylward, A., 411, 416
 Azari, R., 57, 59, 380
 Azzara, S., 120
- B**
- Babar, L., 178
 Babb, S., 311, 312, 325
 Babb, S. D., 322
 Babiloni et al. (2019), 170
 Bachen, E. A., 141, 144
 Bachman, J. G., 312, 314
 Bachmann, M. O., 326
 Back, S. E., 122, 123
 Backman, L., 280
 Badiani, A., 362
 Badimon, L., 343
 Badr, H., 277
 Baena, C. P., 406
 Baer, H. A., 202
 Baer, H. J., 345
 Baer, R. A., 125, 205, 208
 Bages, N., 442
 Bagetta, G., 170
 Baggett, L., 298
 Bahrke, M. S., 411
 Baicker, K., 56
 Bailer, U. F., 388
 Bailey, B. N., 343
 Bailey, C. M., 289
 Bailey, J. A., 108
 Bailey, S. C., 432
 Bailis, D. S., 52
 Baillie, A. J., 246
 Baime, M. J., 201
 Bair, T. L., 236
 Bajaj, R. R., 403
 Bakalov, V., 178
 Baken, S., 270
 Baker, F., 79
 Balaam, M., 351
 Balabanis, M. H., 78
 Balady, G. J., 418
 Balbin, E., 72
 Balderson, B. H., 206, 211
 Baldwin, G. T., 178
 Baldwin, G., 178
 Baler, R., 348
 Balfour, J., 239
 Baliki, M. N., 171
 Baliunas, D., 343, 345
 Balkrishnan, R., 67, 68
 Ball, G. D., 382, 385
 Ballantyne, C. M., 345
 Ballbe, M., 327
 Balluz, L. S., 290
 Baltes, P. B., 210, 300
 Banaji, M. R., 350
 Banasiak, N. C., 148
 Band, P. R., 259
 Bandayrel, K., 382, 385
 Bandelow, B., 411
 Bandini, L. G., 376
 Bandura, A., 76, 77, 181
 Banel, D., 286
 Bangsberg, D. R., 68
 Banister, C. E., 267
 Bannuru, R., 205, 208, 314
 Banoczy, J., 320
 Bantle, J. P., 286
 Bantum, E. O., 270
 Banzer, W., 413
 Bao, W., 285
 Bar, K.-J., 341
 Baranowski, T., 244
 Barbaro Paparo, S., 207
 Barber, B., 176
 Barber, J., 200

- Barber, T. X., 200
 Barbour, R., 247
 Barckley, M., 85
 Bardia, A., 263
 Barefoot, J. C., 239, 240
 Bareham, D. W., 321
 Barengo, N. C., 402, 414
 Barger, S. D., 122, 125
 Barish, E. E., 376
 Barlas, P., 179
 Barlow, J. H., 277
 Barlow, W., 178
 Barnes, P. J., 289
 Barnes, P. M., 187, 189, 190, 191, 193, 194, 196, 202, 203, 215
 Barnett, A., 424
 Barnett, A. I., 347, 348, 349
 Barnett, B. S., 358
 Barnett, D. W., 424
 Barnett, L. W., 327
 Barnett, R., 234, 235, 236
 Barone, E. J., 150, 246
 Barouei, J., 137
 Barr, R. G., 321
 Barr, T., 346
 Barrett, S. P., 317
 Barringer, T. A., 238
 Barron, F., 73
 Barron, K. D., 209, 411
 Barry, A. E., 342
 Barry, M., 321
 Barth, J., 326
 Barth, K. R., 47, 49
 Bartmann, U., 411
 Barton, D. A., 246
 Barton, G. R., 326
 Barton-Donovan, K., 143
 Bartter, T., 360
 Barzi, F., 286
 Barzilay, J. I., 236
 Basden, S. L., 363
 Basili, S., 179
 Basow, S. A., 389
 Bass, E. B., 198, 205, 208
 Bassford, T., 28
 Bastian, L. A., 441
 Bateman, E. D., 289
 Bates, D. W., 59
 Bath, J., 246
 Batty, 9
 Bau, J. M., 389
 Baucom, D. H., 271
 Bauer, B. A., 217
 Bauld, L., 327
 Baum, A., 16, 137, 138, 139
 Bauma, M., 275
 Bauman, A., 420, 421, 423
 Bauman, L. J., 148
 Baumann, L. J., 50
 Baumann, P., 343
 Baumeister, R. F., 152, 160
 Baumeister, S. E., 349
 Baumgarden, J., 199
 Bautista, L., 233, 237
 Baxter, L., 445
 Bayon, V., 377
 Beach, M. C., 66
 Beacham, G., 292
 Beals, J., 74
 Beals-Erickson, S., 203
 Beatty, L., 277
 Becerra, L. S., 203
 Beck, A. T., 175, 181
 Beck, C., 280
 Beck, F., 262
 Beck, V., 433
 Becker, A. E., 382, 389, 392, 393
 Becker, B. J., 411, 416
 Becker, C. B., 393
 Becker, J., 363
 Becker, M. H., 76
 Beckman, L. J., 296
 Bedrosian, R., 393
 Beecher, H. K., 163
 Beecher, L. H., 341
 Beelen, S., 183
 Beetz, A., 117
 Behel, S., 297
 Beilin, L., 243
 Beinart, N., 283
 Bekke-Hansen, S., 240
 Belar, C. D., 11, 14, 16
 Belardinelli, M. O., 201
 Bell, J. D., 373
 Bell, L., 182
 Bell, R., 269
 Bell, R. A., 57, 59
 Bell, S., 346
 Bellanger, R. A., 215
 Belloc, N., 32, 445
 Bemis-Dougherty, A., 408, 415
 Bena, J., 322
 Benaim, C., 174
 Benard, V. C., 255
 Ben-Arye, E., 217
 Benatti, F. B., 386
 Bendapudi, N. M., 58
 Bender, A., 190
 Bender, S., 390
 Bendinelli, B., 408, 415
 Bendle, S., 68
 Benedetti, F., 23, 24
 Bengel, J., 326
 Bengtsson, J., 109
 Benight, C. C., 122
 Benjamin, E. J., 228, 240
 Benner, J. S., 72
 Bennett, A. S., 417
 Bennett, G. G., 146
 Bennett, I. M., 432
 Bennett, J., 57
 Bennett, K., 300, 301
 Bennett, M., 320
 Bennett, M. E., 354
 Bennett, P. H., 288
 Bennett, P., 114
 Benowitz, N. L., 322
 Ben-Shlomo, Y., 48
 Bensing, J., 276, 277, 278
 Bensoussan, A., 213, 214
 Bentley, B., 72
 Bento et al. 2020, 53
 Bentur, Y., 357
 Benvenuti, A., 258
 Benyamin, R. M., 178
 Benyamini, Y., 47
 Berendsen, M., 278
 Beresford, S. A., 28
 Berg, L., 282
 Berger, M. Y., 208, 209
 Berger, R. S., 183
 Berger, Z., 198, 205, 208
 Bergman, B. G., 353
 Bergman, P., 423
 Bergmann, M. M., 445
 Bergmann, M., 379, 380
 Bergmark, K. H., 351
 Bergson, G., 326
 Berhane, K., 290
 Berk, M., 165
 Berkman, L. F., 32, 114, 246, 445
 Berkman, N. D., 208
 Berley, N., 150
 Berlin, J. A., 23
 Berman, B., 207, 211, 215, 216, 217
 Berman, J. D., 204
 Bermudez, O. I., 375
 Bernards, S., 351
 Berne, R. M., 228
 Berner, M. M., 206, 208
 Bernstein, L., 264
 Bernstein, M., 56
 Berridge, D. M., 343
 Berry, J. D., 228
 Berry, J. T., 290
 Berry, L. L., 58
 Bertakis, K. D., 380
 Bertram, L., 280
 Berwick, D. M., 59, 60
 Berwick, M., 266
 Bessesen, D. H., 378
 Best, S. R., 151
 Betsch, C., 54
 Betzner, A. E., 315
 Beversdorf, D. Q., 138
 Bhat, V. M., 35
 Bhatt, S. P., 244
 Bhattacharyya, M. R., 73
 Bhochhibhoya, A., 326
 Bhutta, Z. A., 324
 Bianchi, G., 228
 Bianchini, K. J., 175
 Bickel, W. K., 327
 Bickel-Swenson, D., 277
 Biener, L., 324
 Bierut, L. J., 345
 Bigal, M. E., 170
 Bigatti, S., 174
 Bigbee, W. L., 259
 Bige, V., 150
 Bigger, T., 246
 Biglan, A., 323
 Bilbo, S. D., 139
 Bild, D. E., 241
 Billison, M. L., 267

- Bingham, S., 236, 446
 Bingham, T., 297
 Binns, M., 282
 Bird, S. T., 296
 Birdee, G., 203, 216
 Birkenaes, A. B., 362
 Birkenhager, W. H., 228
 Birmingham, W., 142, 240
 Biron, C., 52
 Birtane, M., 172
 Bischoff-Grethe, A., 388
 Bish, C.L., 283
 Bisson, J., 122, 123
 Biswas, A., 403
 Bjorck-Akesson, E., 279
 Black, D., 321
 Black, D. R., 317
 Black, D. S., 139
 Black, E., 286
 Black, H. R., 28
 Black, L. I., 187, 189, 190, 191, 193,
 196, 202, 203, 215
 Black, P. H., 147
 Black, R. A., 404
 Black, S., 175
 Blackburn, E. H., 142
 Blackett, K., N., 145, 240
 Blackmore, E. R., 150
 Blackwell, E., 236
 Blair, A., 407, 415
 Blair, S. N., 53, 405, 406, 407, 414, 415,
 417, 418
 Blair, S., 403
 Blalock, J. E., 137
 Blanchard, C. M., 79
 Blanchard, E. B., 120, 143, 209
 Blanchard, J., 57, 58, 74
 Blanch-Hartigan, D., 58
 Bland, S. D., 297
 Blanton, H., 85, 86
 Blascovich, J., 117, 234, 301
 Bleich, S. N., 66
 Block, S. D., 301
 Blodgett Salafia, E. H., 391
 Bloedon, L. T., 406, 415
 Blomberg, B. B., 120
 Blomberg, B., 122, 123, 139
 Blomqvist, J., 353
 Blond, E., 388
 Bloodgood, B., 264
 Bloom, B., 215
 Bloom, J. R., 271
 Bloom, J., 31
 Bloomfield, K., 340
 Bloor, M., 52
 Blot, W. J., 259
 Blount, R. L., 60
 BlueSpruce, J., 210
 Bluher, M., 248, 377
 Blum, C. M., 120, 180
 Blumenthal, J. A., 206, 241, 246, 411, 415
 Blumer, N., 290
 Blundell, J. E., 370, 376, 378
 Bluthe, R.-M., 137
 Blyth, A., 326
 Blyth, F. M., 166, 170
 Boardman, J. D., 315
 Boddy, K., 205
 Bode, C., 341
 Bode, J. C., 341
 Bodenhamer-Davis, E., 349
 Bodenheimer, T., 437, 438, 439, 440
 Bodenmann, G., 102
 Bodhi, B., 198
 Boeing, H., 379, 380, 445
 Boersma, K., 165, 171, 182
 Boersma, L. J., 277
 Boerwinkle, E., 345
 Boettger, M. K., 341
 Boeve, B. F., 279
 Boey, K. W., 248
 Boffetta, P., 35, 258
 Bogart, L. M., 83
 Bogg, T., 72
 Bogl, L. H., 373
 Bohlmeijer, E. T., 183
 Bohm, M. K., 178
 Bohuizen, H. C., 440
 Boice, J. D., Jr., 259
 Boissevain, M. D., 181, 183, 209
 Boisvert, J. A., 390
 Boland, R., 298
 Boldt, E., 209
 Bolge, S. C., 178
 Bolger, N., 278, 302
 Bolier, R., 182, 183
 Bolotin, A., 248
 Bolten, M., 113
 Bombak, A., 386
 Bombardier, C., 207, 211
 Bonacchi, K., 378
 Bonanno, G. A., 301, 302
 Bond, F. W., 122, 123
 Bond, J., 280
 Bond, R., 125
 Bondy, S., 331
 Bonevski, B., 76
 Bonevski, D., 108
 Bonica, J. J., 164
 Bonilla, K., 286
 Bookwala, J., 389
 Booth, A., 102
 Booth, R. J., 120, 271
 Booth, S., 125
 Bootman, J. L., 59
 Boots, L. M. M., 283
 Borden, W. B., 228
 Border, R., 150
 Boren, S. A., 287
 Borge, M., 373
 Borge, A., 119
 Borges, G. L. G., 343
 Borghi, C., 228, 234
 Borgwardt, S., 357
 Borland, R., 317, 321, 327, 328
 Born, J., 152
 Borod, J. C., 123, 125
 Borrell, L. N., 432, 434
 Borroto-Ponce, R., 443
 Bos, V., 239
 Bosch-Capblanch, S., 89
 Bosetti, C., 72
 Bosettum, C., 264
 Boshuizen, H. C., 321, 406, 414
 Bosworth, H. B., 239, 441
 Bottcher, Y., 377
 Botticello, A. L., 283, 301
 Bottonari, K. A., 72
 Bottos, S., 143
 Botvin, G. J., 363
 Boudreau, C., 321
 Boudreaux, E. D., 59
 Bouldin, E. D., 283
 Boulet, L. P., 289
 Bourgeois, P., 202
 Boutelle, K. N., 386
 Bovbjerg, D. H., 144
 Bovbjerg, D. H., 287
 Bowe, S., 202
 Bowen, D., 28
 Bowen, K., 142
 Bower, C., 390, 343
 Bower, J. E., 124, 125
 Bower, P., 291
 Bowers, S. L., 139
 Bowie, J. V., 432
 Bowles, H. R., 423
 Boyd, C. J., 435
 Boyd, D. B., 216, 263
 Boylan, L. S., 57
 Boysen, G., 406, 414
 Braamse, A. M. J., 277
 Brace, M. J., 278, 279
 Brack, N., 351
 Bradbury, T. N., 102
 Bradford, D., 313
 Bradford, D. E., 350
 Bradlee, M. L., 244
 Bradley, C., 148
 Bradley, P. S., 146
 Brady, K., 327
 Brady, K. T., 122, 123
 Brady, R., 283
 Brady, S. M., 70
 Braet, C., 393
 Bragdon, B., 266
 Brage, S., 239
 Brahim, J. S., 166
 Braiker, H. B., 354
 Braithwaite, A. W., 142
 Braithwaite, A., 150
 Braitman, L. E., 270
 Brammer, L., 53
 Branch, L. G., 327
 Brand, R. J., 32, 240
 Brandberg, Y., 277
 Brandon, D. T., 146
 Brandon, T., 326
 Brandon, T. H., 316
 Branscum, P., 326
 Branson, B. M., 298
 Brantley, P. J., 47, 115,
 383, 385
 Branwell, R., 175
 Bratslavsky, E., 152

- Bratt, M. A., 210, 214
 Braun-Fahrlander, C., 290
 Bravata, D. M., 228
 Bray, G. A., 372, 375
 Braymiller, J. L., 444
 Brehm, B. J., 416, 417
 Breibart, W., 182, 183
 Breitbart, W., 301
 Breitner, J. C., 280
 Breland, J. Y., 50
 Bremer, T., 364
 Brenner, N., 313, 384
 Brenn, T., 264
 Brennan, P. L., 345
 Brennan, P., 35
 Brenner, D. R., 380
 Brenner, H., 418
 Brensinger, C. M., 66, 67
 Bresin, K., 350
 Breslau, N., 141
 Breslow, L., 32, 445
 Breslow, R. A., 345
 Bret, M. E., 280, 282
 Breteler, M. M. B., 280
 Brethauer, S. A., 384
 Breuer, B., 178
 Breuer, J., 122
 Brewer, N., 322
 Brewer, N. T., 54
 Brewin, C. R., 182, 183
 Brewster, L. G., 432
 Brichard, S., 315, 321, 331
 Brick, C., 79
 Bricker, J. B., 315
 Brickwood, K. J., 423
 Brief, D. J., 70
 Brilliant, L., 53
 Brink, S., 34, 231, 232
 Brinkhaus, B., 204, 207, 211
 Brinn, M. P., 324
 Briones, T. L., 131
 Brissette, I., 117
 Britton, A., 346
 Britton, J., 322, 323
 Brizon, V. C., 87
 Broadbent, E., 51, 120
 Brocard, P., 54
 Brock, J., 383
 Brockmeyer, T., 391
 Brockwell, S. E., 325
 Brody, B. A., 25
 Brody, M. L., 395
 Broecker, M., 164
 Bromberg, M. H., 182, 183
 Broms, U., 314
 Brondel, L., 378
 Bronstein, J., 360
 Broocks, A., 411
 Brooks, J. T., 297
 Brooks, L., 411
 Brooks, V. L., 237
 Broom, D. H., 115
 Broom, J., 382
 Broome, M. E., 211
 Brosnan, J. M., 380
 Brosschot, J. F., 242
 Broussard, S. R., 137
 Broutian, T., 267
 Brouwer, W. B., 440
 Brown, A. D., 413
 Brown, B., 200
 Brown, B. P., 351
 Brown, D., 427, 428, 442, 444, 446
 Brown, D. R., 432
 Brown, F. L., 124, 125, 375, 387
 Brown, I., 87
 Brown, J. L., 166
 Brown, M. L., 172
 Brown, P. A., 150
 Brown, P. J., 24
 Brown, T. A., 390, 392
 Brown, T. J., 326
 Brown, W. J., 213, 214
 Browndyke, J. N., 206, 411, 415
 Brownell, C., 354
 Brownell, K. D., 378
 Brownley, K. A., 208
 Brownson, R. C., 422, 423
 Brozek, J., 370, 388
 Bruch, H., 388
 Bruhl, S., 165
 Brummett, B. H., 239
 Brun, J., 52
 Brunner, R. L., 28
 Brussoni, M., 320
 Brust, J. C. M., 360
 Bryan, A., 16, 81
 Bryant, J., 76
 Bryant, R., 122, 123
 Brychta, R., 368, 373, 376, 386
 Brys, M., 280
 Brzyski, R., 28
 Buchanan, C. M., 120
 Buchanan, L. R., 422
 Buchert, R., 358
 Buchner, D., 264
 Bucholz, K. K., 314
 Buchwald, D., 145
 Buchwald, H., 286
 Buckhaults, P. J., 267
 Budaj, A., 145, 232, 234, 236
 Buetow, S., 57
 Buffart, L. M., 277
 Buffington, A. L. H., 160, 172
 Buick, D., 51, 145
 Buijsse, B., 408, 415
 Bujarski, S., 354
 Bulik, C. M., 208
 Bull, F. C., 421, 423
 Bulow, C., 171
 Bunde, J., 151, 240, 241, 242
 Bunn, J. Y., 316
 Burckhardt, C. S., 174
 Burg, M. M., 240
 Burg, M., 246
 Burgess, D. J., 49
 Burgess, S., 343
 Burhans, D., 411
 Buring, J. E., 408, 415
 Burke, A., 203, 209, 215
 Burke, B. L., 354
 Burke, C. T., 302
 Burke, E., 320
 Burke, G. L., 238
 Burke, J., 74
 Burke, J. D., 444
 Burns, R., 97
 Burrows, M., 408, 415
 Burschka, J. M., 213, 214
 Burt, R., 28
 Burton, J., 432
 Burwell, R. A., 393
 Buse, D. C., 170
 Busenbark, D., 357
 Bush, J. W., 430
 Bushnell, M. C., 160, 176, 177
 Businelle, M. S., 312, 441
 Busse, J. W., 382, 385
 Bussey-Smith, K. L., 291
 Bussolari, C., 118, 298
 Bussone, G., 142
 Bustamante, M. X., 443
 Buttorff, C., 275
 Buttriss, J., 238
 Buuk, B. P., 270
 Bylund, C. L., 53
 Byrne, C. M., 151
 Byron, A. T., 56
-
- C**
 Caan, B., 28
 Caballero, B., 375
 Cabana, M. D., 291
 Cacioppo, J. T., 152, 239
 Caddell, J. M., 107
 Cahill, D., 368
 Cahill, J., 28
 Cahill, K., 89, 325
 Cahill, S. P., 122, 123
 Cain, A., 71, 72
 Cain, D., 295
 Cain, V. S., 231
 Cairney, J., 72
 Caldwell, D. S., 172
 Cale, L., 422
 Caleb Alexander, G., 71, 73
 Calhoun, J. B., 109
 Calhoun, L. G., 302
 Califf, R. M., 240
 Calipel, S., 209
 Callaghan, W. M., 321
 Callaway, E., 292
 Calle, E. E., 319, 321
 Calleson, E., 166, 174, 176
 Calogero, R., 375
 Camacho, T. C., 446
 Cambois, E., 430
 Camelley, K. B., 302
 Cameron, E. R., 89
 Cameron, I. D., 207
 Cameron, J., 364
 Cameron, L. D., 47, 50, 145, 271

- Cameron, L., 50
 Cameron, O., 14
 Cameron, R., 121
 Camhi, J., 130
 Cami, J., 355
 Camilleri, M., 384
 Campbell, I. G., 407, 415
 Campbell, J. C., 170
 Campbell, J. M., 352
 Campbell, J. N., 158
 Campbell, S., 258
 Campbell, W. W., 408
 Campbell, W., 355
 Campeau, S., 411
 Cancellor, J., 182, 183
 Canchola, A. J., 270
 Cancian, F. M., 283
 Candel, M., 315
 Cannon, M. F., 107
 Cannon, W., 102
 Cao, J., 287
 Cao, S., 322, 345
 Cao, Y., 32
 Capewell, S., 230, 231, 445, 331
 Caplan, R. D., 108
 Capone, J. C., 351
 Capuron, L., 139
 Caputi, T. L., 324, 363
 Carbone, S., 405
 Cardi, V., 390, 392
 Carey, M. P., 298
 Carey, Tl, 166, 174, 176
 Carinci, A. J., 207
 Carlisle, M., 142
 Carlquist, J. F., 236
 Carlson, C. R., 143
 Carlson, L. E., 125, 210, 213
 Carmen, B., 354
 Carmody, J., 125, 201, 205, 208, 210, 214
 Carmon, Z., 23
 Carney, A., 350
 Carney, R. M., 246
 Caro, J., 171
 Carpenter, C., 375
 Carpenter, C. J., 76
 Carpenter, M. J., 327, 328
 Carpentier, M. R., 317
 Carr, D., 300
 Carr, H., 423
 Carr, J. L., 443, 444
 Carrera, J., 216
 Carrey, J., 54
 Carriere, K., 395
 Carrillo, J. E., 56
 Carrillo, V. A., 56
 Carrion, V. G., 107
 Carroll, M. D., 375, 382, 409
 Carson, K. V., 324
 Carson, W. E., 271, 415
 Carter, A., 347
 Carter-Harris, L., 47, 49
 Carton, M., 35
 Caruso, M., 176
 Caruso, T. J., 207
 Carver, C. S., 116, 117, 120, 122, 123, 139, 268, 269
 Carver, T., 258
 Case, T. I., 137
 Casey, D., 171
 Casey, K. L., 24
 Casper, D. M., 147
 Caspi, A., 142, 150, 239
 Casselbrant, M. L., 142
 Cassidy, E. L., 182
 Castelnuovo, G., 383
 Castillo, D., 68
 Castor, M. L., 432
 Castro, C. M., 57
 Castro, Y., 312
 Catalan, V. S., 259
 Catania, J. White, M., 53
 Catellier, D., 246
 Cattivelli, R., 383
 Caudwell, P., 370, 376
 Caulfield, B., 200
 Caunca, M. R., 411, 416
 Causadias, J. M., 147
 Causer, L., 238, 263
 Cavanagh, K., 125
 Cavanaugh, K., 432
 Cavazos-Rehg, P., 345
 Cawthon, R. M., 142
 Cazottes, C., 174
 Ceccarelli, F., 179
 Celentano, D. D., 295, 297
 Celestine, M. J., 432
 Cen, S., 316
 Cenee, S., 35
 Cepeda, M. S., 23
 Cerhan, J. R., 263
 Cerin, E., 424
 Ceylan-Isik, A. F., 341
 Chaddock, L., 412, 416
 Chadi, N., 358, 362
 Chae, C. U., 418
 Chagpar, A., 266
 Chajes, V., 379, 380
 Chakrabarty, S., 172
 Chakraborty, R., 376
 Chamberlin, C. L., 432
 Chambers, L., 57
 Chambers, S. K., 277
 Chambliss, H. O., 410, 416
 Champagne, C. M., 383
 Chan, A.-W., 31
 Chan, C. H. Y., 49, 208
 Chan, C. L. W., 49
 Chan, D. S., 32
 Chan, E. P., 205, 208
 Chan, J. S. M., 49, 208
 Chan, M., 130
 Chan, S. M., 210
 Chan, V. W. S., 174
 Chan, W., 281
 Chandar, A. K., 384
 Chandrabose, M., 424
 Chandrashekar, S., 138
 Chang, A. B., 324
 Chang, A. Y., 321
 Chang, E. C., 141
 Chang, L., 357
 Chang, M. H., 431, 432
 Chang, S. H., 384
 Chang, Y. F., 117
 Chao, A., 321
 Chaplin, W., 58
 Chapman, B. P., 47
 Chapman, C. R., 158
 Chapman, D. P., 377
 Chapman, E., 170–171
 Chapman, R. H., 72
 Charchar, F., 228, 234
 Charlee, C., 57
 Chase, A., 393
 Chassin, L., 341
 Chastain, D. C., 175
 Chastain, L. G., 348
 Chastek, B., 71
 Chatkoff, D. K., 122, 123, 182, 183
 Chatterjee, N., 258
 Chatterji, S., 430
 Chatters, L. M., 119
 Chaturvedi, A. K., 267
 Chaturvedi, N., 48
 Chayer, C., 282
 Cheater, F., 47
 Chen, C. H., 281
 Chen, C. M., 345
 Chen, C.-N., 389
 Chen, E., 77, 110, 137, 148
 Chen, H. Y., 210
 Chen, I., 166, 174, 176
 Chen, J., 151, 287, 315, 380, 432, 445
 Chen, J. T., 434
 Chen, K. Y., 368, 373, 376, 386
 Chen, M., 293, 383, 402, 414
 Chen, P., 315
 Chen, Q., 271
 Chen, W. W., 445
 Chen, Y., 24, 409
 Chen, Z., 151, 280
 Cheng, A., 340
 Cheng, E. M., 203
 Cheng, I., 270
 Cheng, K., 207
 Cheng, T. Y. L., 248
 Cheng, T.-F., 79, 422
 Cheng, W., 182, 183
 Cheng, Y., 406, 414
 Cheng, Z. H., 389
 Cherkin, D., 178, 210
 Cherkin, D. C., 206, 207, 211
 Cherry, C., 295
 Chesney, M. A., 216, 217
 Chesterman, J., 327
 Chesterton, L. S., 179
 Cheung, W. M., 205, 208
 Cheung, Y. K., 411, 416
 Chi, I., 277
 Chia, L. R., 74
 Chialvo, D. R., 171
 Chiamonte, G. R., 47
 Chida, T., 142

- Chida, Y., 72, 137, 145, 241, 287, 290, 298
 Chiesa, A., 201, 205, 208
 Chifamba, J., 238
 Chikritzhs, T., 345
 Chin, S. L., 238
 Chin, S. N. M., 382
 Chipperfield, J. G., 52
 Chipungu, S., 363
 Chistiakov, D. A., 234
 Chiuvé, S. E., 244, 263
 Chiva-Blanch, G., 343, 345
 Chlebowski, R. T., 28
 Chochinov, H. M., 301
 Choi, M. K., 327
 Choiniere, M., 166
 Cholakians, E., 344
 Chon, T. Y., 217
 Chong, C. S., 205, 208
 Choo, E. K., 47
 Chooi, Y. C., 375
 Chosak, A., 389
 Chou, F., 293
 Chou, P. S., 353
 Chou, R., 171, 182
 Chou, Y.-L., 314
 Chow, C. K., 234, 239
 Chow, G., 216
 Chowdhury, R., 406
 Christenfeld, N., 108
 Christensen, A. J., 441
 Christensen, B., 354
 Christian, L. M., 138, 344
 Christie, J. D., 66, 67
 Christo, P. J., 178
 Chu, L., 345
 Chu, M., 151
 Chubb, E., 328
 Chui, E., 32
 Chung, M., 201
 Chung, M. L., 72
 Chung, M. T., 384
 Chung, T., 348
 Chupp, G. L., 148, 289, 290
 Church, T., 403, 414
 Church, T. R., 71
 Chyen, D., 313, 384
 Chyu, L., 203
 Cibulka, N. J., 294
 Cicognani, E., 119
 Ciechanowski, P., 72
 Ciesla, J. A., 72, 149
 Cifani, C., 348
 Cinciripini, P. M., 312, 441, 444
 Cintron, A., 165, 166
 Ciocanel, O., 87
 Claassens, L., 164
 Clapp-Channing, N. E., 239
 Clare, L., 283
 Clark, A. D., 440
 Clark, A. E., 301
 Clark, A. M., 247
 Clark, C. G., 410, 416
 Clark, J. M., 66
 Clark, K., 116
 Clark, K. M., 378
 Clark, L., 176, 329
 Clark, L. A., 150
 Clark, L. M., 78
 Clark, N. M., 291
 Clark, P. A., 298
 Clark, R., 241, 436
 Clarke, A. E., 202
 Clarke, C. A., 270
 Clarke, D., 282
 Clarke, R., 171
 Clarke, T. C., 187, 189–191, 193, 196, 202, 203, 215
 Clark-Grill, M., 205
 Clausen, M., 358
 Clavel-Chapelon, G., 379, 380
 Claxton, A. J., 71
 Claydon, L. S., 179
 Cleary, M., 417
 Cleeland, C. S., 172
 Clegg, D. J., 380
 Cleland, J. A., 165
 Clements, K. L., 182, 183
 Clements, K., 96, 113
 Clever, S. L., 59
 Cline, R., 73
 Cloninger, L., 107, 108
 Clouse, R. E., 287
 Clow, A., 109
 Coast, J. R., 411, 416
 Cobb, S., 45, 51
 Cochran, J. E., 408, 415
 Cody, M. J., 433
 Coe, C. L., 138
 Coelho, J., 378
 Coen, P. K., 408
 Coffman, J. M., 291
 Cofield, M., 287
 Cofino, J. C., 358
 Cofta-Gunn, L., 444
 Cofta-Woerpel, L. M., 312
 Cofta-Woerpel, L., 441
 Coghill, R. C., 174
 Cohen, F., 55
 Cohen, J., 71, 106, 331
 Cohen, J. D., 24
 Cohen, L. L., 60
 Cohen, M. V., 236
 Cohen, N. J., 412, 416
 Cohen, N., 136
 Cohen, S., 11, 47, 72, 110, 113, 117, 138, 139, 141, 142, 144, 148, 270
 Cohn, L., 148, 289, 290
 Colangelo, L. A., 239
 Colbert, L. H., 408, 415
 Colcombe, S. J., 411, 416
 Colder, M., 123, 125
 Colditz, G. A., 238, 257, 265, 286, 345, 384, 406, 407, 414
 Cole, J. C., 213, 214, 357
 Cole, J. W., 35
 Cole, S. W., 144
 Colella, T. J., 240
 Colella, T. J. F., 248
 Coleman, T., 327
 Coles, S. L., 377
 Coletta, M. A., 178
 Colilla, S. A., 323
 Collins, E. M., 72
 Collins, M. A., 345
 Collins, R. L., 297
 Colloca, L., 23, 24
 Colner, W., 444
 Colpani, V., 406
 Comaty, J. E., 177, 178, 179, 357
 Combs, A., 178
 Combs, D., 160
 Commerford, P., 237
 Comninos, A. N., 139
 Conger, J., 349
 Congleton, C., 201
 Conley, S. B., 383
 Conn, D., 282
 Conn, V. S., 408, 415
 Connelly, M., 408, 415
 Conner, M., 77, 79, 80, 83
 Connolly, S. W., 316
 Connors, G. J., 363
 Constance, J., 262
 Conterno, L., 170–171
 Conway, C., 117
 Cook, A. J., 175, 206, 207, 211
 Cook, B. J., 417
 Cook, I. A., 206, 392
 Cook, R. L., 47, 49
 Cooke, M. E., 444
 Cookson, W. O. C. M., 290
 Cooley-Quille, M., 432
 Coomber, K., 316
 Coombs, A., 71, 72
 Coon, D. W., 283
 Cooney, G. M., 410
 Coons, H. L., 441
 Cooper, B., 402, 419
 Cooper, C., 380
 Cooper, C. L., 52
 Cooper, E., 215
 Cooper, H., 206, 411, 415
 Cooper, K. L., 203
 Cooper, L. A.
 Cooper, M. J., 390
 Cooper, M. W., 28
 Cooper, N. J., 288
 Cooper, R. L., 328
 Cooper, V., 51
 Corasaniti, M. T., 170
 Corazzini, L. L., 23
 Cordingley, J., 353
 Corey, P. N., 59
 Corle, D., 28
 Cornford, C. S., 55
 Cornford, H. M., 55
 Corrado, D., 418
 Correa, J. B., 316
 Corrigan, J. M., 59
 Corso, P., 422, 423
 Cortina, L. M., 151
 Corton, E. S., 151
 Costa, L. C. M., 175
 Costa, L. O. P., 175

Costa, N. M., 107
 Costa, P. T., 72, 441
 Costacou, T., 236
 Costantini, A. S., 258
 Costello, T. A., 238
 Costello, T. J., 312, 441
 Coster, G., 57
 Coughlin, J. A., 265
 Coulter, I. D., 216
 Counts, M., 57
 Coupal, L., 331
 Couper, J. W., 268
 Courneya, K. S., 79, 277, 408, 415
 Courtemanche, C., 329
 Courtemanche, J., 206
 Courtney, A. U., 291
 Coussons-Read, M. E., 138
 Coutinho, E. S. F., 410, 416
 Couturier, J., 391
 Covington, C. Y., 343
 Covington, E. C., 163
 Cowan, M. J., 246
 Cox, B. J., 165
 Cox, C., 439
 Cox, D. J., 287
 Cox, J., 234, 235, 236
 Cox, K. L., 412, 416
 Cox, N., 285
 Coyle, J. R., 68
 Coyne, J. C., 113, 149, 269, 271
 Cozen, W., 267
 Crabbe, J. C., 347
 Craciun, C., 84
 Craig, A. D., 167
 Craig, B. A., 408
 Craig, C. L., 423
 Craig, I. W., 150
 Craig, K. D., 163
 Craig, R. G., 280
 Cramer, H., 125
 Cramer, J., 71
 Cramer, J. A., 71, 288
 Cramer, S., 443
 Crane, C., 344
 Creamer, M. R., 311, 312, 318, 325
 Creek, K. E., 267
 Creemers, M. C. W., 148
 Crepaz, N., 122, 123, 139, 298
 Crerand, C. E., 383
 Creswell, J. D., 198, 201
 Crimmins, E., 281
 Crimmins, E. M., 8, 434
 Crisp, A., 390
 Crispo, A., 35
 Cristini, P., 388
 Critchley, J. A., 230, 231, 331, 326
 Crocker, R. L., 217
 Crocker, T., 282
 Crockett, M. J., 123
 Croft, J. B., 230, 231, 234, 239, 377
 Croft, P., 166, 170
 Croghan, I. T., 36
 Croghan, T. W., 65, 72
 Crombez, G., 165, 171, 181, 182
 Cronan, T. A., 174

Cronce, J. M., 351
 Cronenwett, L. R., 59
 Cronin, E., 31
 Cronin, K., 255
 Crosby, R., 391
 Cross, J. T., Jr., 171
 Cross, T. H., 182, 183
 Cross, W., 147, 241
 Crowe, M., 281
 Crowell, T. L., 296
 Cruciani, R. A., 178
 Cruess, D. G., 150, 298
 Cruess, S., 122, 123, 298
 Crum, A. J., 58
 Crusser, K., 327
 Cruz, A. A., 289
 Cruz, T. B., 316
 Cuan-Baltazar, J. Y., 53
 Cuesta, A., 72
 Cuevas, E., 178
 Cullen, K. A., 311, 312
 Cummings, D. E., 376, 377
 Cummings, K. M., 321, 327
 Cummings, M. K., 317
 Cummings, S. R., 320
 Cunha, M., 119
 Cuning, D., 393
 Cunningham, J. A., 353, 354
 Cunningham, T. J., 234, 239, 258
 Cuntz, U., 391
 Curfs, L., 343
 Curlin, F. A., 25
 Curtin, J. H., 350
 Curtin, J. J., 350
 Cust, A. E., 407
 Cutler, D. M., 430
 Cutrona, C. E., 150
 Cutshall, S. M., 217
 Cykert, S., 166, 174, 176
 Cyr, D., 35
 Czajkowski, S. M., 246
 Czech, J., 282
 Czerniecki, J. M., 173

D

D'Adamo, C., 216, 217, 348
 D'Agostino, R., 244
 D'Agostino, R. B. Sr., 240, 377
 D'Amico, D., 142
 D'Arcy, Y., 178
 D'Este, C., 72
 D'Souza, J. M., 267, 269
 D'Urso, G., 327
 Da Costa, C., 202
 da Silva, A. A., 417
 da Silva Oliveira, M. S., 386
 da Silva Paulo, J. R., 417
 Dafoe, W. A., 240
 Dagenais, S., 171
 Dahne, J., 328
 Dai, S., 228
 Dai, Y., 271
 Daines, L., 291

Dakanalis, A., 389, 390
 Dal Maso, L., 72, 264
 Dalal, H. M., 248
 Dalcin, A., 383
 Dale, L. P., 423
 Daley, A., 410, 416
 Daly, J., 72
 Damasceno, A., 238
 Damen, L., 208, 209
 Damiano, S. R., 375, 387
 Damjanovic, A. K., 138
 Dammeyer, J., 267
 Damschroder, L. J., 276
 Danaei, G., 261, 346
 Danese, A., 142
 Danforth, E. Jr., 372
 Dangardt, F., 345
 Daniel, M., 59, 215
 Daniel, R., 211
 Daniels, M. C., 287
 Daniels, N., 431
 Dannecker, E. A., 166
 Dans, A. L., 238
 Dans, T., 145, 232, 234, 236
 Dansinger, M. L., 248
 Dantzer, R., 137, 149, 150
 Dar, T., 240
 Darbinian, J. A., 237
 Darby, S., 35
 Dare, C., 391
 Darvishi, N., 344
 Das, J. K., 324
 Das, S., 320
 Dasanayake, A. P., 280
 Dasgupta, K., 234, 235, 236
 Datta, S., 178
 Datta, S. D., 267
 Daumann, J., 357
 David, D., 383
 Davidson, K., 246
 Davidson, K. W., 242, 246
 Davidson, R. J., 24, 201
 Davidson, T. L., 378
 Davies, P., 54
 Davies, W. H., 148
 Daviglus, M. L., 239, 241, 243
 Davila, J., 149
 Davin, C., 320
 Davis, A. K., 355, 390
 Davis, A. M., 182, 183
 Davis, B., 375
 Davis, C., 417
 Davis, C. C., 386
 Davis, C. L., 413, 416
 Davis, H., 147
 Davis, J., 283
 Davis, K. C., 326
 Davis, K. D., 160
 Davis, M. C., 148
 Davis, R. B., 59, 178, 203, 216, 408, 415
 Davis, T. C., 432
 Davydov, D. M., 206, 392
 Daws, L. C., 379
 Dawson, D. A., 353, 355

- Dawson, D. V., 265
 Day, H., 311, 312
 Day, H. E. W., 411
 Day, N., 236, 345, 446
 Day-Lally, C. A., 319
 Daza, P., 444
 De Andres, J., 179
 De Benedittis, G., 201, 209
 de Bloom, J., 111
 de Boer, M. R., 208
 De Bourdeaudhuij, I., 423
 de Brouwer, S. J. M., 148
 De Civita, M., 71
 De Fruyt, F., 242
 de Gonzalez, A. B., 286
 de Jong, J. R., 181, 183, 209
 De Koning, H. J., 267
 de Leeuw, R., 143
 de Leon, M. J., 280
 De Lew, N., 432
 De Marzo, A. M., 259
 de Morais Sato, P., 386
 de Ridder, D., 276, 277, 278
 de Sanctis, A., 377
 de Souza Santos, R., 380
 de Villiers, C. B., 78
 de Vries, H., 315
 de Vries, S., 109
 de Vugt, M. E., 283
 de Weerth, C., 111
 de Wit, G. A., 440
 Deandrea, S., 172
 Deatrick, J. A., 278, 279
 Debanne, S. M., 281
 DeBar, L., 393, 395
 DeBusk, R., 246
 Decaluwe, V., 393
 DeCorby, K., 324
 Decullier, E., 31
 DeFilipp, L., 389, 390
 DeFulio, A., 80
 Degenhardt, L., 363
 DeJong, G. M., 270
 Dekker, J., 277
 Del Gratta, C., 201
 Delahanty, D. L.
 Delahanty, J., 320
 Delalfosse, P., 35
 Delaney, H. D., 355
 Delaney, K. P., 297
 Delaney, K., 207, 211
 Delaney-Black, V., 343
 Deleemans, J., 210, 213
 DeLeo, J. A., 167
 Delgado, D., 182, 183
 Delgado-Rodrigues, M., 407, 415
 DeLongis, A., 113, 149
 Delvaux, T., 296
 DeMaria, E. J., 384
 Dembroski, T. M., 241
 Demissie, Z., 384
 Demming, B., 349
 Demoncada, A. C., 277
 Demoto, Y., 168
 Dempsey, A., 267
 Denekens, J., 69
 Denham, M., 108
 Deniz, O., 143
 Denkova, E., 201
 Denninger, J. W., 213, 214
 Dennis, B., 237
 Dennis, J. M., 107
 Dennis, L. K., 265
 Denollet, J., 242
 Depp, C., 283
 Depue, J. B., 315
 Derakhshan, M. H., 259
 Derby, C., 280
 Derhagopian, R. P., 120, 269
 Derogatis, L. R., 175
 DeRubeis, R. J., 23
 DeRue, D. S., 111
 deRuiter, W. K., 72
 Des Jarlais, D. C., 364
 Desai, K., 203
 Desai, M., 141
 DeSilva, M., 357
 Desimone, M. F., 120
 Deslandes, A., 410, 416
 Desnuelle, C., 174
 Detillion, C. E., 115
 Dettenborn, L., 113
 Dettmer, A. M., 109
 Deusser, M., 413
 Devakumar, D., 97
 Devlin, M. J., 417
 DevPaul, B., 358
 DeVries, A. C., 115
 DeWall, C. N., 160
 Dewaraja, R., 107, 151
 Dewey, D., 143
 Deyo, R. A., 23, 178, 207, 211
 Dhabhar, F. S., 139, 142, 150
 Dhana, K., 406
 Dhanani, N. M., 207
 Dhar, A. K., 246
 Dhillon, W. S., 139
 Di Bonaventure, M. V., 348
 Diamond, J. A., 237
 Diamond, M. C., 205, 208
 Diamond, M., 170
 Diamond, P., 68
 Diaz, A., 122, 139
 Diaz, E., 151
 Diaz, L. E., 120
 Diaz, R., 234, 236
 Dibben, G. O., 248
 Dick, D. M., 444
 Dickerson, F., 320
 Dickerson, S. S., 116, 139
 DiClemente, C. C., 81, 82, 244, 320, 326
 Diener, H.-C., 238
 Dietz, P. M., 321
 DiFranza, J., 315
 Digerlamo, D., 326
 Dilorio, C., 298
 Dilkes-Frayne, E., 347
 Dillard, J., 171, 216
 Dillingham, T. R., 173
 Dillon, J. F., 87
 DiLorenzo, T., 287
 DiMatteo, M. R., 57, 58, 65, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 89
 Dimidjian, S., 23
 Dimitrov, S., 152
 Dimsdale, J. E., 55, 241
 DiNunno, E. A., 297
 Ding, C., 375
 Ding, E. L., 346
 Ding, Y., 49
 DiNicola, D. D., 58
 Diniz, J. B., 389
 Dion, D., 166
 Dionne, R. A., 166
 Direito, A., 423
 Dishman, R. K., 410, 416
 Disse, E., 388
 Distefan, J. M., 315
 Dittmann, M., 287
 Dixon, J. B., 377
 Dixon, K., 246
 Dixon, L., 320
 do Nascimento, J. R. A. Jr., 417
 Do, A., 217
 Doak, C. C., 433
 Doak, L. G., 433
 Dobbins, M., 324
 Dobkin, P. L., 71
 Dobos, G., 125
 Dobs, A. S., 216
 Dobson, R., 262, 423
 Dodd, S., 165
 Dogra, N., 277
 Doherty, P., 248
 Dohm, F.-A., 394
 Dolder, P. C., 357
 Doll, R., 27
 Dollard, K. M., 119
 Domingue, B. W., 315
 Don, B. P., 53
 Donaghy, M. E., 410, 416
 Donaldson, M., 59
 Donelan, K., 53
 Donenberg, G. R., 295
 Dong, C., 411, 416
 Donohue, K. F., 350
 Donovan, J., 48
 Doody, M. M., 260
 Doody, R. S., 281
 Dorenlot, P., 150
 Dorer, D. J., 390, 391
 Dornbusch, S., 55
 Dorr, N., 242
 dos Santos Silva, I., 29
 Dosemeci, M., 407, 415
 Doty, H. E., 48
 Doucette, S., 211
 Dougall, A. L., 139
 Douglas, S. D., 150
 Douketis, J. D., 385
 Dovidio, J. F., 74
 Dowell, D., 178, 182
 Downer, B., 346

Downs, J. S., 47, 49
 Doyle, A. C., 393
 Doyle, W. J., 11
 Doyle, W. J., 47, 142, 144
 Drake, C. G., 259
 Dreer, L. W., 119
 Dreisbach, J., 357
 Dreon, D. M., 403, 414
 Driskell, J. E., 122, 123
 Drotar, D., 72
 Drummond, D. C., 352
 Dryden, J., 81
 Dryden, T., 211
 Du, Y., 285
 Duan, S., 382
 Duangdao, K. M., 118
 Dube, C. E., 53
 Dube, S. R., 315, 322
 Duberstein, P. R., 47
 Dudley, W. N., 244
 Duerden, E. G., 206
 Dufouil, C., 320, 343, 345
 Duka, T. K., 344
 Duke, A., 317
 Dulai, P. S., 384
 Dunbar-Jacob, J., 74
 Duncan, G. H., 206
 Dunckley, P., 161
 Dunkel-Schetter, C., 148
 Dunn, A. L., 410, 416
 Dunn, E. M., 52
 Dunton, G. F., 68
 Dupee, M. A., 89
 Dupuis, G., 166
 Dura, J. R., 138
 Duran, M., 182, 183
 Duran, R. E., 72
 Durham, T. M., 298
 Durkin, S. J., 316
 Dusseldrop, E., 248, 298
 Dutra, L., 363
 Duval, S., 408, 415
 Dwan, K., 31, 410
 Dyck, I., 363
 Dye, C., 203
 Dyer, A. R., 237, 243
 Dyson, M., 138
 Dzurova, D., 327

E

Eagon, C. J., 384
 Eaker, E. D., 240
 Eakin, E. G., 423
 Earll, L., 246
 Easdon, C. M., 348
 Easley, K. A., 409
 Easterbrook, P. J., 31
 Easton, D. F., 258
 Eaton, L., 295
 Ebbeling, C. B., 375
 Ebbert, J. O., 36
 Ebert, L., 107

Ebrahim, S., 88, 239
 Ebrecht, M., 138
 Eccleston, C., 182, 441
 Echwald, S., 286
 Eckenrode, J., 55
 Eckhardt, C. I., 344
 Ecoffey, C., 209
 Ecoiffier, M., 174
 Edache, I. Y., 47, 49
 Eddy, K. T., 390, 391
 Edenberg, H. J., 347
 Edmonds, G. W., 72
 Edwards, A. G. K., 271
 Edwards, B. K., 260
 Edwards, C. L., 146
 Edwards, G., 335, 337, 348
 Edwards, L. M., 110
 Edwards, R., 316
 Edwards, W. T., 173
 Egbert, N., 445
 Ege, M. J., 290
 Egger, M., 405, 406, 414
 Eggert, J., 343
 Egnatuk, C. M., 23, 24
 Ehde, D. M., 173
 Ehlert, U., 122, 123
 Ehrlich, G. E., 179
 Ehrlich, S., 391
 Eisenbach, Z., 239
 Eisenberg, D., 23
 Eisenberg, M. E., 389
 Eisenberg, M. J., 236, 248
 Eisenberger, N. I., 123, 137, 160
 Eisenmann, J. C., 407, 415
 Eissenberg, T., 444
 Eke, P. I., 234, 239
 Ekelund, U., 239
 Ekholm, O., 327
 Eklund, R., 113
 Elaijami, T. K., 236
 Elavsky, S., 411, 416
 Elgharib, N., 236
 Elhadad, N., 270
 Elias, J. A., 148, 289, 290
 Elifson, K. W., 296
 Elkind, M. S. V., 411, 416
 Ell, K., 277
 Ellard, D. R., 277
 Eller, N. H., 112
 Ellickson, P. L., 338
 Elliott, C. H., 61
 Elliott, J. M., 146
 Elliott, P., 237
 Elliott, R. A., 290, 291
 Ellis, A., 181, 283
 Ellis, B. M., 60
 Ellis, C., 145
 Ellis, D. A., 72, 73
 Ellis, W., 174
 Ellison, L., 171
 Ellison, R. C., 244
 Ellsworth, N. M., 403, 414
 Elsasser, G. N., 150, 246
 Elswick, B. M., 408, 415
 Elzinga, B., 141

Emanuel, A. S., 72, 79
 Emanuel, E. J., 25, 439, 315
 Emanuel, L., 300, 301
 Emery, C. F., 271, 415
 Emery, S., 322
 Emmers-Sommer, T. M., 296
 Emms, S., 239
 Empana, J.-P., 240
 Endler, N. S., 288
 Endresen, G. K. M., 172
 Endresen, I. M., 109
 Eng, P. C., 139
 Engberg, J., 78
 Engel, C. C., 122, 123
 Engelfriet, P. M., 440
 Engalgau, M. M., 236
 Engels, E. A., 267
 Engels, R. C. M. E., 316
 Engert, J. C., 233
 Engfeldt, P., 343
 Engh, J. A., 362
 England, L. J., 321
 Engler, M. B., 237, 238
 Engler, M. M., 237
 English, T. M., 53
 English, W. J., 384
 Engstrom, L.-M. T., 166
 Engstrom, M., 364
 Ensel, W. M., 411, 416
 Enstrom, J. E., 323
 Epel, E., 14, 141
 Epel, E. S., 142
 Ephraim, P. L., 173
 Epiphanious, E., 291
 Epker, J., 165
 Epstein, A. M., 432
 Epstein, L. H., 378
 Erbas, B., 377
 Erbaugh, J., 175
 Erblich, J., 287
 Erdmann, J., 232
 Ereshefsky, L., 68
 Erickson, K. I., 411, 412, 416
 Eriksen, A., 87
 Erlinger, T. P., 383
 Ernst, E., 207, 211, 213, 214
 Ernst, T., 357
 Ernster, V. L., 321
 Ernsting, A., 84
 Erro, J., 207, 211
 Ertekin-Taner, N., 280
 Erwin, P. J., 263
 Eslick, G. D., 213, 214
 Esposito, C., 278
 Esterman, A. J., 324
 Estes, N. A. M. III, 418
 Estevez, E., 170–171
 Estok, R., 286
 Etherton, J. L., 175
 Ethier, K. A., 313
 Etnier, J., 213, 214
 Ettner, S. L., 109
 Etu, S. F., 375
 Eurich, D. T., 65

Evans, B., 283
 Evans, D., 51
 Evans, D. D., 209
 Evans, D. L., 150
 Evans, G. W., 108, 109
 Evans, K., 283
 Evans, L. M., 150
 Evans, M., 384
 Evans, P., 109, 385
 Evans, P. C., 387
 Evans, S., 432
 Evans-Polce, R. J., 435
 Everett, M. D., 409
 Everitt, M., 351
 Evers, A., 84
 Evers, A. W., 165
 Evers, A. W. M., 148
 Everson, S. A., 146
 Eves, F. F., 422
 Eyles, H., 433
 Ezekiel, J. E., 24
 Ezzati, M., 239, 261, 325, 346
 Ezzo, J., 210, 214

F

Fabrazzo, M., 391, 393
 Faden, R. R., 326
 Faerden, A., 362
 Faes, S., 87
 Faeslis, C., 166, 174, 176
 Fagerstrom, K. O., 317
 Fahey, J. L., 144
 Fahey, T., 88
 Fahrback, K., 286
 Fair, M. E., 259
 Fairbank, J. A., 107
 Fairburn, C. G., 390, 394
 Fairhurst, M., 161
 Fairlie, A. M., 351
 Faith, M. S., 378
 Falagas, M. E., 73
 Fales, J., 182, 183
 Falissard, B., 377
 Fallahi, C. R., 351
 Falzon, L., 72
 Fan, T.-P., 190
 Fang, A., 389
 Fant, R. V., 317
 Faraizadega, Z., 406
 Fardo, D., 346
 Farhadi, M., 344
 Faris, P., 125
 Farley, J. J., 71
 Farnham, P. G., 298
 Farr, S. L., 321
 Farran, C. J., 283
 Farrar, W. B., 271, 415
 Farre, M., 355
 Farrell, D., 288
 Farrell, S. P., 148
 Farstad, S. M., 391, 394
 Faulkner, G. E., 72, 80, 403
 Faulkner, G., 422

Fautrot, K., 182
 Fautrei, B., 202
 Fava, J. L., 385
 Favaloro, E. J., 418
 Favier, I., 171
 Fawcett, J., 23
 Federman, A., 432
 Feenstra, T. L., 440
 Fei, F., 322
 Fei, Y., 207, 211
 Feighery, E. C., 316
 Feinglos, M. N., 287
 Feldman, E. A., 316
 Feldman, P. J., 47
 Feldman, R. S., 108
 Feldt, K., 174
 Felson, R. B., 344
 Feng, F., 213, 214
 Feng, L., 213
 Feng, Y.-H., 213
 Fenster, A., 248
 Fenwick, J. W., 327
 Ferguson, E., 72, 81
 Ferguson, J., 327
 Ferguson, R. J., 277
 Fernandez, A., 440
 Fernandez, E., 113
 Fernandez, G., 413
 Fernandez, M. I., 72
 Fernandez, M. S., 348
 Fernandez, S., 66, 72
 Fernandez-Berrocal, P., 124, 125
 Ferrando, L., 151
 Ferrari, M. D., 171
 Ferrence, R., 331
 Ferretti, A., 201
 Ferri, M., 353
 Ferris, T. G., 437, 438, 440
 Ferrucci, L., 266
 Feskens, E. J., 406, 414
 Feuer, E. J., 172
 Feuerstein, M., 277
 Fichtenberg, C. M., 326
 Fichter, M., 342
 Fidler, J. A., 315
 Fiedler, G. M., 248
 Field, R. W., 259
 Field, T., 195
 Fielder, R. L., 298
 Fife, T., 360
 Fife-Schaw, C., 287, 288
 Fifield, J., 148
 Fillion, K. B., 236, 248
 Filippidis, F. T.
 Fillingam, (2018), 165
 Fillingim, R. B., 165, 166
 Fillmore, M. T., 348
 Fine, L. J., 236
 Fines, P., 430
 Fink, P., 205, 208
 Finkelstein, A., 56
 Finkelstein, Y., 324
 Finlayson, G., 370, 376, 378
 Finnerup, N. B., 23

Finney Rutten, L. J., 248
 Finniss, D. G., 24
 Fioretti, C., 69
 Fireman, B. H., 237
 Firenzuoli, F., 215
 Firth, A. U., 255
 Fischer, S., 391
 Fischer, T. L., 341
 Fischer, U., 342
 Fischhoff, B., 47, 49
 Fish, J. N., 435
 Fisher, J. D., 81
 Fisher, M., 51
 Fisher, W. A., 81
 Fitzgerald, T. E., 116
 Fitzpatrick, A. L., 280
 Fitzpatrick, R., 390
 Fjorback, L. O., 205, 208
 Flanders, W. D., 319
 Flaxman, P. E., 122, 123
 Flay, B. R., 315, 324
 Flegal, K. M., 375, 379
 Fleishman, S. B., 178
 Fleming, A., 378
 Fleming, N. I., 142
 Fleming, P. L., 293
 Fleshner, M., 136, 411
 Fletcher, M. A., 72, 122, 123, 298
 Flicker, L., 412, 416
 Flinn, M. V., 102
 Flinois, A., 171
 Flint, K. H., 313, 384
 Floderus, B., 402
 Flor, H., 173, 176
 Flores, G., 57
 Flores, L. Y., 158
 Flower, K., 68
 Flynn, B. S., 316, 327
 Flynn, D. D., 358
 Flynn, M., 210, 213
 Flynn, M. G., 408
 Foa, E. B., 122, 123
 Foad, A.-A., 430
 Foets, M., 276, 277
 Fogel, J., 278
 Foley, T. E., 411
 Folkman, S., 105, 106, 113, 117, 118, 149, 278, 298
 Foltin, R. W., 417
 Foltz, V., 202
 Fong, G. T., 317, 327
 Fonnebo, V., 202
 Fonseca, V., 68
 Fontaine, T., 282
 Fontan, G., 57
 Fontana, L., 379, 380
 Foo, M.-D., 108
 Foohey, P., 56
 Foran, H., 344
 Foran, K. A., 389
 Forastiere, F., 35
 Forbes, G. B., 402
 Forcehimes, A. A., 354
 Ford, E. S., 228, 230, 231, 445

Fordiani, J. M., 72
 Fordyce, W. E., 23, 176, 180
 Forey, B. A., 323
 Forget, M., 207
 Forhan, M., 47, 49
 Forlenza, J. J., 137, 138
 Foroud, T., 347
 Forquera, R. A., 432
 Forrester, K. K., 323
 Forsman, M., 112
 Forsyth, M. R., 182, 183
 Fort, D., 432
 Fortier, M. S., 424
 Fortmann, A., 287
 Fortmann, S. P., 316
 Fortmann, S. P., 403, 414
 Forys, K., 207, 211
 Foster, B. D., 406, 415
 Foster, J. K., 280
 Foster, J. K., 412, 416
 Foster, N. E., 175, 207
 Foster, N. L., 282
 Fothergill, E., 368, 373, 376, 386
 Fouladi, R. T., 444
 Foulon, C., 390
 Fournier, J. C., 23
 Fournier, M., 278
 Fox, C. S., 228, 377
 Fox, S. M. III., 417
 Fragaszy, E. B., 97
 Frampton, C., 146
 Franceschi, S., 264
 Franceschi, Sl. 72
 Franco, D. H., 87
 Francke, A. L., 282
 Franco, O. H., 405, 406, 415
 Frank, A. P., 380
 Frank, E., 144, 216
 Frank, G. K. W., 387, 388
 Franklin, B., 409
 Franklin, B. A., 418
 Franklin, G., 178
 Franklin, T., 325
 Franklin, V. L., 287
 Franko, D. L., 390, 391, 392
 Franks, H. M., 118
 Franks, M. M., 287
 Franks, P. W., 239
 Franz, G., 190
 Franzini, Ribble, Keddle, (2001), 434
 Franzosi, M. G., 234, 237
 Fraser, G. E., 441
 Fratiglioni, L., 280, 281
 Frattaroli, J., 123, 125
 Freak-Poli, R., 406
 Frederick, H.-C., 391
 Frederiksen, K., 402
 Fredrickson, B. L., 117
 Freedman, (2011), 216
 Freedman, D. M., 260
 Freedman, L. S., 262
 Freeman, A. M., 248
 Freeman, L. E. B., 265
 Freeman, P., 105
 Freeman, R., 236

Freguson, T. F., 241
 Freire, G. L. M., 417
 Freitag, F., 170
 French, S. A., 316
 Frendel, M., 217
 Fresco, D. M., 125
 Fretts, A. M., 238
 Freud, S., 122
 Freund, G. C., 149, 160
 Freund, P. R., 181, 183
 Frey, K. A., 58
 Frey, M., 72, 73
 Frey-Hewitt, B., 403, 414
 Fricchione, G. L., 213, 214
 Frick, P. A., 78
 Fried, L. P., 239
 Friedenreich, C. M., 264, 407, 413
 Friederich, H.-C., 391
 Friedland, R. P., 281
 Friedlander, E., 25
 Friedlander, L., 391
 Friedlander, Y., 239
 Friedman, B., 47
 Friedman, M., 224, 240
 Friedmann, E., 117
 Friedrich, W., 108
 Friedson, E., 55
 Friend, R., 47
 Fries, J. F., 440
 Frisina, P. G., 123, 125, 147, 241
 Fritsch, T., 281
 Froberg, K., 407
 Frodi, A., 147, 287
 Froelicher, E. S., 199, 205
 Froger, J., 174
 Frohe, T., 177–178
 Fromme, H., 322
 Frone, M. R., 349
 Fry, C. L., 347
 Fryar, C. D., 375, 382, 409
 Fu, F., 277
 Fuchs, P. N., 166, 170
 Fuchs, V. R., 439
 Fuertes, J. N., 57
 Fuhrel-Fortbis, A., 295
 Fuhrer, R., 281
 Fujino, Y., 9
 Fujiwara, Y., 147
 Fukunishi, I., 152
 Fukushima, M., 213, 214
 Fulkerson, J. A., 316
 Fuller, S. J., 280
 Fuller-Marashi, L., 389
 Fullerton, H. J., 228
 Fulmer, E. B., 315
 Fulton, J. E., 418
 Fumal, A., 171, 180
 Fung, T. T., 244
 Funk, K., 383, 385
 Furberg, A. S., 415
 Furedi, J., 391
 Furlan, A. D., 211
 Furnham, A., 203

G

Gaab, J., 122, 123
 Gaard, M., 264
 Gable, S. L., 160
 Gabriel, G., 340
 Gabriel, R., 151
 Gacia-Pardo, M., 291
 Gaertner, S. L., 74
 Gaesser, G. A., 386
 Gaffney, M., 246
 Gaffud, T. J. G., 342
 Gagliese, L., 174
 Gagnier, J., 11
 Gagnon, C. M., 166
 Gaissmaier, W., 54
 Gal, R., 423
 Galdas, P. M., 47
 Galea, S., 151
 Gali, W.A., 234–236
 Gallacher, J., 343
 Gallagher-Thompson, D., 283
 Gallagher, B., 198
 Gallagher, J. R., 364
 Gallagher, K. M., 72, 79
 Gallagher, M. W., 269
 Galland, L., 57
 Gallegos-Macias, A. R., 73
 Galli, A., 379
 Gallo, L., 395
 Gallo, L. C., 48, 109, 287
 Galloway, G. P., 68
 Gamble, C., 31
 Gambrell-Jones, J., 282
 Gambrell, S., 292
 Gan, T. J., 178
 Gan, X., 237
 Gan, Y., 345
 Gandhi, T. K., 57
 Gandy, S. E., 280
 Gans, J. A., 71, 73, 88, 89
 Gao, N., 215
 Gao, X., 375, 383, 402, 414
 Gao, Y., 23
 Gapstur, S. M., 264
 Garavello, W., 264
 Garay, S. C., 403, 414
 Garber, J., 165
 Garber, M. C.
 Garcia, G. E., 213
 Garcia, J., 182, 183
 Garcia, K., 84
 Garcia-Camba, E., 151
 Garcia-Closas, M., 258
 Garcia-Pedroza, F., 170–171
 Garcia-Sepulcre, M. F., 72
 Garcia-Tenorio, R. S., 329
 Gard, T., 201
 Gardener, H., 411, 416
 Gardner, B., 282
 Gardner, C. O., 149, 193
 Gardner, K. A., 150
 Gardovska, D., 47, 49
 Garfinkel, P. E., 375, 389
 Garg, A. X., 89

- Garland, E. L., 182, 355
 Garn, H., 290
 Garnefski, N., 298
 Garner, D. M., 375, 389
 Garner, P., 89
 Garofalo, R., 117, 295
 Garrido, J., 170–171
 Garrison, M. E. B., 114
 Garside, D., 243
 Garssen, B., 267
 Garssen, J., 239
 Gass, M., 28
 Gatchel, R. J., 165, 170, 176, 178
 Gatz, M., 149, 193, 281
 Gatzounis, R., 181
 Gauderman, W. J., 290
 Gauthier, S., 282
 Gautier, A., 262
 Gaylord, S. A., 182
 Gazmararian, J. A., 432
 Geary, D. C., 102
 Geha, P. Y., 171
 Geisser, M. E., 176
 Geisser, M. S., 71
 Gelernter, J., 141
 Gelhaar, T., 119
 Gellad, W. F., 73
 Geller, P. A., 124, 125
 Gemmell, L., 326
 Genao, I., 166, 174, 176
 Genest, J., 236
 Gentilin, S., 122, 123
 Gentzke, A. S., 321
 Genuneit, J., 290
 George, A., 411
 George, S., 343, 344
 George, S. M., 264
 Georges, J., 283
 Germann, J., 102
 Germeroth, L. J., 328
 Gerrard, M., 85, 86
 Gershon, A. S., 289
 Gerteis, J., 10
 Gervais, R., 399, 400, 402
 Gervais, W. M., 137
 Gerzoff, R. B., 288
 Gestal-Otero, J. J., 144
 Gettes, D. R., 150
 Geurts, S., 111
 Geyer, M. A., 358
 Ghali, W. A., 239
 Ghamri, R. A., 325, 326
 Ghersi, D., 31
 Ghiya, N., 178
 Gianaros, P. J., 102
 Gibbons, C., 370, 376
 Gibbons, F. X., 85, 86
 Gibbs, J. L., 50
 Gibler, R. C., 291
 Gibney, A., 45
 Gibson, J., 172
 Gibson, S. J., 176
 Gidron, Y., 270
 Gidycz, C. A., 443
 Gielissen, M. F. J., 277
 Giese-Davis, J., 150
 Giggins, O., 200
 Gilbert, M. T. P., 292
 Gilbert, T. C., 57
 Gilbody, S., 239
 Giles, M., 246
 Giles, W. H., 35, 230, 231, 234, 239
 Giles-Corti, B., 424
 Gillespie, C., 228
 Gillett, R., 182
 Gillies, C., 430
 Gillies, C. L., 288
 Gilliland, F. D., 290
 Gillis, A., 354
 Gillison, M. L., 267
 Gilman, S. E., 327, 393
 Gilpin, E. A., 315, 316
 Gil-Rivas, V., 107
 Gima, A. S., 404
 Ginley, M. K., 351
 Ginsberg, J., 53
 Giordani, P. J., 65
 Girona, E., 72
 Gitchell, J. G., 325
 Gladden, R. M., 178
 Glahn, D. C., 68
 Glancy, D., 121
 Glantz, S. A., 315, 321, 322, 326
 Glanz, A., 81
 Glaser, R., 138, 139, 150, 283
 Glaser, S. L., 270
 Glasper, E. R., 115
 Glassman, A. H., 246
 Glasziou, P., 88
 Gleason, J. A., 248
 Glennon, J. A., 372
 Glimelius, B., 269
 Glodzik-Sobanska, L., 280
 Glombiewski, J. A., 182, 183
 Gloss, D., 360
 Gluck, S., 120
 Glynn, B., 182, 183
 Glynn, L. M., 108
 Glynn, R. J., 345
 Gmel, G., 340
 Gnjec, A., 280
 Gnys, M., 78
 Go, A. S., 228, 237
 Gobrogge, K. L., 356
 Godfrey, J. R., 246
 Godfrey, K., 395
 Godtfredsen, N. S., 331
 Goffaux, P., 161
 Gold, D. R., 148, 290
 Goldberg, J., 287
 Goldberg, R., 320
 Goldberg, S. B., 205, 208
 Goldblatt, E., 324
 Goldenberg, D. L., 207, 211
 Golden-Kreutz, D. M., 271, 415
 Goldman, R., 284
 Goldman-Mellor, S., 142
 Goldring, M. B., 172
 Goldring, S. R., 172
 Goldschmidt, A. B., 393
 Goldsmith, C., 343
 Goldsmith, L. J., 57
 Goldstein, A., 161
 Goldstein, B. A., 270
 Goldstein, M. S., 203
 Goldston, K., 246
 Gomez, L. F., 423
 Gomez, S. L., 270
 Gomez-Estefan, C., 432
 Gomuzzie, A. G., 405
 Gonder-Frederick, L. A., 287
 Gondoli, D. M., 391
 Gong, C., 322
 Gong, F., 237
 Gong, Q., 288
 Gonzaga, G., 102
 Gonzalez, J. S., 72
 Gonzalez, O., 290
 Gonzalez, R., 149
 Gonzalez, V., 262
 Gonzalez-Cuevas, G., 356
 Goberman-Hill, R., 178
 Good, M., 211
 Goode, A. D., 423
 Goodin, S., 51
 Goodman, J. M., 80
 Goodman, M. T., 267
 Goodpaster, B. H., 380
 Goodwin, D. G., 341
 Goodwin, R. D., 165, 320, 327
 Goossens, M. E. J. B., 165,
 171, 182
 Gordon, D. B., 178
 Gordon, D., 236, 340
 Gordon, J. R., 349, 423
 Gordon, N., 182, 183
 Gordon, N. F., 418
 Gorelick, D. A., 341
 Gori, L., 215
 Gorin, A. A., 385
 Gortmaker, S. L., 275
 Gorwood, P., 390
 Gotham, H. J., 340
 Gottdiener, J. S., 236
 Gottheil, E., 271
 Gould, E., 432
 Gould, H. M., 240
 Gould, N. F., 198, 205, 208
 Gould, R. L., 282
 Gouzoulis-Mayfrank, E., 357
 Gowers, S., 390
 Goyal, M., 198, 205, 208
 Grace, S., 234, 235, 236
 Grace, S. L., 248
 Grady, D., 321
 Grafton, K. V., 175
 Graham, A. L., 326
 Graham, J. E., 138, 344
 Graham, K., 343, 351
 Graham, N., 207
 Graig, E., 108
 Granger, D. A., 102
 Granlund, M., 279
 Grant, B. F., 353
 Grant, J., 435

Grant, J. A., 206
 Grant, J. D., 314
 Grant, K., 346
 Gratiou, C., 322
 Graubard, B. I., 267, 379
 Graves, J. V., 378
 Gray, J. J., 375
 Gray, R., 343
 Gray-Donald, K., 331
 Graziano, W. G., 124, 125
 Grazi, L., 142
 Greaves, F. E. C., 60
 Greaves, L., 327
 Grechko, A. V., 234
 Green, D. J., 383, 384
 Green, R., 354, 427, 428, 442, 444
 Greendale, G. A., 102
 Greene, M. C., 353
 Greene, S. A., 287
 Greenfield, T. K., 343
 Greenhouse, J. B., 72, 117
 Greenland, P., 239, 243
 Greenland, S., 29
 Greenlaw, R., 248
 Greenley, R. N., 441
 Greenlund, K. J., 240, 283
 Greenop, K. R., 412, 416
 Greenwald, P., 30
 Greenwood, B. N., 411
 Greenwood, D. C., 32
 Greenwood, K. M., 195
 Greer, D. S., 445
 Gregg, E. W., 288
 Gregg, K. J., 375, 387
 Gregory, J. W., 286
 Greig, C. A., 410
 Greiner, J. W., 408, 415
 Greisinger, A. J., 312
 Greve, K. W., 175
 Greven, S., 145
 Grey, M., 288
 Griffin, J. A., 351
 Griffin, K. W., 363
 Griffin, P., 302
 Griffing, S., 151
 Griffith, J. L., 248
 Griffiths, C. J., 291
 Griffiths, M. D., 416, 417
 Griffiths, R., 317
 Griffiths, R. R., 361
 Grigsby, J., 357
 Grigsby, P., 357
 Grilo, C. M., 393, 395
 Griswold, M. P., 144
 Gritz, E. R., 444
 Grizzle, A. J., 217
 Grodin, E., 354
 Groenewald, C., 203
 Groenewegen, P. P., 109
 Groesz, L., 393
 Grogan, S., 386
 Grøholt, B., 344
 Gronberg, H., 259
 Gronseth, G., 360

Groot, C., 280
 Gross, A., 211
 Gross, C. P., 251, 315
 Gross, C. R., 73
 Gross, M. M., 348
 Gross, R., 66, 67
 Grossman, D., 265
 Grossman, L. M., 349
 Grossman, P., 205, 208
 Grover, S. A., 331
 Gruber, J., 56
 Grubisich, S. A., 213, 214
 Grucza, R. A., 345
 Gruen, R., 113
 Gruenewald, T. L., 102
 Grum, C. M., 291
 Grunau, R. E., 176
 Grundy, P., 437
 Grundy, S. M., 236, 239
 Grzywacz, J. G., 8, 109
 Gu, D., 287
 Gu, J., 125
 Gual, A., 327
 Gualano, B., 386
 Guallar, E., 345
 Guan, X., 47, 206
 Guaragna, M., 207
 Guarneri, P., 209
 Guck, T. P., 150, 246
 Gueben, D., 174
 Guelfi, J. D., 390
 Guevara, J. P., 291
 Guida, F., 35
 Guilbert, P., 262
 Guilbert, T. W., 291
 Guillaunce, J. L., 341
 Guillen, J. E., 68
 Guillot, J., 78
 Guleria, R., 244
 Gull, W., 388
 Gulliford, K., 388
 Gullion, C. M., 383, 385
 Gulliver, S. B., 327
 Gumieniak, O., 288
 Gunak, M. M., 395
 Gunes, C., 142
 Gunn, H., 142
 Gunn, L., 424
 Gunter, J. L., 279
 Guo, J., 368, 373, 376, 386
 Guo, Q., 271
 Guo, X., 213, 214
 Guo, Z., 239
 Gupta, S., 88
 Guralnik, J. M., 239
 Guru, V., 234, 235, 236
 Gurung, R. A. R., 102
 Gustafson, E. M., 148
 Gustafson, M. L., 57
 Gustavsson, P., 258
 Gutermann, J., 182, 183
 Guthlin, D., 145
 Guy, G. P., 178
 Guyatt, G., 381, 384
 Gwaltney, C. J., 78

Gwaltney, J. M., Jr., 11, 47, 144
 Gyllenhammer, L., 124, 125

H

Ha, M., 260
 Haahtela, T., 290
 Haak, T., 207, 211
 Haan, J., 171
 Haan, M. N., 282
 Haas, D. C., 246
 Haas, J. S., 73
 Haase, N., 54
 Haberer, J. E., 68
 Hack, T. F., 301
 Hackett, T. P., 241
 Hackl-Herrwerth, A., 354
 Haden, S. C., 151
 Hadjstavropoulos, T., 176
 Haegerich, T. M., 182
 Haenle, M. M., 345
 Haf Dahl, A. R., 408, 415
 Hagan, C. C., 69
 Hagedoorn, M., 270
 Hagenah, U., 391
 Hagensee, M., 267
 Hager, R., 248
 Hagger, M. S., 51
 Haggerty, R. J., 55
 Haghtalab, T., 344
 Hagimoto, A., 327
 Hagstromer, M., 420
 Haig, A. J., 176
 Hail, L., 393
 Hailey, S., 271
 Hailpern, S. M., 228
 Haines, J. I., 384
 Hains, A. A., 148
 Hajek, P., 328
 Hakala, P., 379
 Halberstadt, A. L., 358
 Haldeman, S., 171
 Halek, C., 390
 Hales, D., 412
 Haley, M., 13
 Haley, W., 431
 Halkjaer, H., 379, 380
 Hall, C. B., 280
 Hall, H., 202, 203
 Hall, H. R., 293
 Hall, J. A., 58
 Hall, K. D., 373, 376, 368, 386
 Hall, M. A., 53
 Hall, W., 347
 Hall, W. D., 363
 Hallgren, K. A., 354
 Hallqvist, J., 285
 Halm, E., 51
 Halm, E. A., 246
 Halpern, P., 357
 Halpin, H. A., 291
 Ham, L. S., 351
 Hama, A., 314
 Hamer, M., 142, 145, 407, 411, 416, 417

- Hamel, L. M., 423
 Hamer, M., 287
 Hamet, P., 234–236
 Hamill-Ruth, R. J., 175
 Hamilton, W., 47, 48
 Hamilton-Barclay, T., 81
 Hammen, C., 149
 Hammond, D., 317, 321
 Hammond, K., 389
 Hampson, S. E., 85, 287, 288
 Han, L., 382
 Handlin, A., 117
 Hanewinkel, R., 315
 Haney, T. L., 240, 241
 Hanis, C., 376
 Hanisch, R., 264
 Hankey, B. F., 260
 Hankey, G. J., 238
 Hankinson, S. E., 345
 Hanks, G. W., 178
 Hanley, M. A., 173
 Hanlon, C. A., 160
 Hann, K. E., 182, 183
 Hannigan, J. H., 343
 Hannum, J. W., 195
 Hanratty, B., 239
 Hansen, A. M., 112
 Hansen, B. L., 47, 48
 Hansen, C. J., 411, 416
 Hansen, D., 385
 Hansen, K., 267
 Hansen, K. B., 109
 Hansen, K. E., 206, 211
 Hansen, L., 406, 414
 Hansen, P. E., 402
 Hansmann, S., 276
 Hanson-Turton, T., 57
 Hanssen, P. F., 316
 Hanus, C., 378
 Hanvik, L. J., 175
 Hapke, U., 329
 Happola, A., 314
 Harakeh, Z., 315, 316, 317
 Harboun, M., 150
 Harder, B., 290
 Harding, M. C., 253
 Harding, T. M., 253
 Hargreaves, D., 378
 Hargreaves, M., 49
 Harkness, K. L., 149
 Harlos, M., 301
 Harman, J. E., 271
 Harman, J. J., 298
 Harnack, L. J., 373
 Harper, C., 357
 Harrell, P. T., 316
 Harrell, W. A., 390
 Harrigan, R. C., 28
 Harriger, J., 375
 Harrington, A., 190
 Harrington, H., 150, 239
 Harrington, H. L., 142
 Harrington, J., 88
 Harris, J., 422
 Harris, M. L., 48
 Harris, P. E., 203
 Harris, S. D., 116, 268
 Harris, T. B., 380, 386
 Harris, T. R., 391
 Harris, W. A., 313, 384
 Harrison, B. J., 149
 Harrison, E. L. R., 328
 Harrison, P. J., 390
 Harsha, D. W., 385
 Harter, J. K., 48
 Hartley, S., 258
 Hartman, D., 390
 Hartman, T. J., 28, 30
 Hartmann, A., 391
 Hartmann-Boyce, J., 328
 Hartvigsen, G., 441
 Hartwell, E., 354
 Hartwell, K., 327
 Hartz, A., 72
 Hartzell, E., 391
 Harvey, N. C., 373
 Harvey, S. M., 296
 Harvie, D. S., 164
 Hasan, O. S. M., 343
 Hasin, D. S., 107
 Haskard, K. B., 70
 Haskell, W. L., 199, 205, 403, 414, 418
 Haslam, P. L., 322
 Hassan El-Sol, A. E.-S., 210
 Hassard, T., 301
 Hasselbach, P., 267
 Hatchard, T., 182, 183
 Hatsukami, D. K., 262
 Hatzenbuehler, M. L., 107
 Hausenblas, H. A., 416, 417
 Hausenblaus, H., 417
 Hausenloy, D. J., 406, 415
 Hawken, S., 145, 232, 234, 236, 237, 240
 Hawkes, R. J., 206, 211
 Hawkins, J., 384
 Hawkley, L. C., 152, 239
 Hay, P. J., 391
 Hay, P. P., 206, 208, 412
 Hayden, J., 207, 211
 Hayes, M., 320
 Hayes, S., 171
 Hayes-Bautista, D. E., 432
 Hayes-Bautista, M., 432
 Hayley, S., 150
 Haynes, R. B., 57, 66, 72, 88, 89
 Haynie, D., 327
 Haynie, D. L., 78
 Hays, J., 28
 Hays, R. D., 207, 211, 216
 Haythornthwaite, J. A., 198, 205, 208
 Hayward, A., 97
 Haywood, J. R., 237
 He, D., 198, 345
 He, L., 314
 Heady, J. A., 404
 HealthGrades., 440
 Healy, K. E., 203
 Heard-Costa, N. L., 377
 Hearn, W. L., 358
 Hearnshaw, H., 69
 Heath, A. C., 314
 Heath, C. W., Jr., 319
 Heath, G. W., 422, 423
 Heather, N., 355, 364
 Heaton, J. A., 351
 Heber, D., 28
 Hebert, E., 78
 Heckbert, S. R., 72
 Heckman, B. W., 328
 Heckman, C., 271
 Hediger, K., 117
 Heederik, D., 290
 Heeren, T., 442, 443
 Heffron, R. C., 216
 Heggebo, L. K., 423
 Heijmans, M., 276, 277
 Heikkila, K., 314
 Heim, C. M., 151
 Heimer, R., 295
 Heinith, F., 385
 Heinly, M. T., 175
 Heinrichs, M., 102
 Heinrichs, N., 271
 Heisler, M., 57, 71, 73, 287
 Heiss, G., 28
 Heit, J. A., 228
 Heitmann, B. L., 377
 Helakorpi, S., 239
 Held, C., 238
 Helder, L., 122, 123
 Helenius, H., 407, 415
 Helgeson, V. S., 118, 119, 246, 270, 278
 Helkala, E.-L., 280
 Hellhammer, D. H., 113
 Helmert, U., 327
 Helmick, C. G., 171
 Helms, C., 346
 Helweg-Larsen, M., 262
 Hembree, E. A., 122, 123
 Hemenway, D., 320
 Hemsing, N., 327
 Henderson, B. E., 264
 Henderson, C. R., 182, 183
 Henderson, K. A., 375
 Henderson, M. D., 175
 Hendriks, H. F. J., 346
 Heneghan, C. J., 88
 Henkin, Y., 248
 Henley, J., 255
 Henley, S. J., 321
 Hennekens, C. H., 238, 257, 418
 Henningfield, J. E., 317
 Hennings, S., 239
 Henrard, J.-C., 150
 Henriksen, J. E., 377
 Henriksen, L., 316
 Henriksen, T. B., 343
 Henriksson, M., 267
 Hens, W., 385
 Henschel, A., 370, 388
 Henschke, N., 180
 Herbert, R., 237

- Herbst, A., 408, 415
 Herbst, J. H., 122, 123, 139, 298
 Herd, N., 328
 Herman, C. P., 378, 386–388
 Herman, P., 387
 Hermann, C. P., 47, 49
 Hermus, A. R. M.M., 383, 384
 Hernan, M., 29
 Hernan, M. A., 320
 Hernandez, A., 432
 Hernandez, B. Y., 267
 Herpertz-Dahlmann, B., 391
 Herpertz, S., 395
 Herrara, V. M., 108
 Herrick, A., 295
 Herring, M. P., 410, 416
 Herrmann, N., 282
 Herrmann, S., 71, 72
 Herzhoff, K., 147
 Herzog, D. B., 390, 391, 392
 Herzog, T., 83, 84
 Herzog, W., 390
 Hession, M., 382
 Hessling, R. M., 150
 Hester, R. K., 355
 Hettige, S., 351
 Heuser, I., 84
 Hewison, J., 50
 Hewitt, R. G., 72
 Hextall, J., 138
 Heyman, G. M., 353
 Heymsfield, S. B., 373
 Hickcox, M., 78
 Hickman, M., 343
 Hiemann, T., 405, 406
 Higgins, J. P., 80, 89
 Higgs, S., 316
 Higuchi, K., 147
 Hilbert, A., 394, 395
 Hiler, M. M., 444
 Hilgard, E. R., 200
 Hilgard, J. R., 200
 Hill, A., 341
 Hill, J. O., 402, 414
 Hill, M. D., 413
 Hill, P. L., 72
 Hiller-Sturmhöfel, S., 355
 Hillhouse, J., 209
 Hillman, C. H., 412, 416
 Hillmer-Vogel, U., 411
 Hillsdon, M., 248
 Hime, G. W., 358
 Himmelstein, D. U., 56, 434, 436, 439
 Hind, K., 408, 415
 Hingson, R., 442, 443
 Hirschman, L. A., 171, 216
 Hiripi, E., 392, 393
 Hirsch, J. K., 141
 Hirsh, A. T., 165
 Hlatky, M. A., 240
 Ho, E., 445
 Ho, R. T. H., 49, 208
 Ho, T., 234, 235, 236
 Hochbaum, G., 76
 Hodgins, D., 353
 Hodgkins, C., 433
 Hodgkins, S., 87
 Hodgson, D., 137
 Hoeymans, N., 9
 Hoffman, B. M., 122, 123, 182, 183, 206, 411, 415
 Hoffmann, K., 379, 380
 Hoffman, K. M., 174
 Hofman, A., 280
 Hofmann, S. G., 125, 182, 183
 Hofstetter, C. R., 322
 Hogan, B. E., 242
 Hogan, E. M., 390
 Hogan, N. S., 278, 301
 Hogan, T. P., 53
 Hogg, R. C., 314
 Hohmann-Marriott, B., 108
 Holden, C., 357
 Holahan, C. J., 345
 Holahan, C. K., 345
 Holder, J. S., 406, 414
 Holder, R. L., 244, 402, 406, 414, 419
 Holick, M. F., 266
 Holl, R. W., 408, 415
 Holland, R., 326
 Hollander, D., 78
 Holley, A. L., 165
 Holley, H., 122, 123, 139
 Hollingworth, J., 25
 Hollis, J. F., 383, 385
 Hollon, S. D., 23
 Holman, D., 198, 205, 208
 Holman, E. A., 107, 118
 Holmbeck, G. N., 441
 Holmes, T. H., 108, 113, 428
 Holst, C., 286
 Holstad, M. M., 298
 Holsti, L., 176
 Holt, L. J., 351
 Holt-Lunstad, J., 33, 114, 240
 Holtzman, D., 297
 Holvoet, P., 380
 Holzel, B. K., 201
 Holzemer, W. L., 293
 Homa, D. M., 322
 Hommel, K. A., 291
 Hon, E., 322
 Hondros, G., 444
 Hone, E., 280
 Honkoop, P. C., 143
 Hood, C. J., 120, 180
 Hoogenveen, R. T., 440
 Hoogeveen, R. C., 345
 Hooghiemstra, A. M., 280
 Hooker, K., 116
 Hooper, M. W., 97
 Hoorn, S. V., 239, 325
 Hootman, J. M., 171, 417
 Hoover, R., 407, 415
 Hope, T., 390
 Hopkins, D. H., 422
 Hopkins, M., 370
 Hopkins, M., 376
 Hopman, M. T. E., 383, 384
 Hopper, J. L., 377
 Horan, J. J., 122, 123
 Hord, H. G., 263
 Horgen, K. B., 378
 Horn, W., 287
 Horne, B. D., 236
 Horne, R., 51, 71, 73
 Hornik, R., 422
 Horowitz, S., 210, 213
 Horton, E. S., 372
 Horwitz, R., 217
 Hosking, J., 246
 Houdeyer, K., 390
 Houldin, A., 150
 House, A., 282
 Houston, D. K., 386
 Houts, P. S., 433
 Houts, R. M., 142
 Hovell, M. F., 322
 Howard, L., 368, 373, 376, 386
 Howard, M. O., 355
 Howard, R. J., 282
 Howard, V. J., 228
 Howe, G. W., 108
 Howe, H. L., 260
 Howe, L. C., 58
 Howze, E. H., 422, 423
 Hrabosky, J. I., 393
 Hromi, A., 350
 Hsiao, A.-F., 203, 216
 Hsu et al., (2013), 160
 Hsu, C., 210
 Hsu, L. L., 236
 Hsu, P., 432
 Hsu, R. T., 288
 Hu, A. W., 118
 Hu, B., 240
 Hu, F. B., 232, 244, 263, 285, 286, 345, 379, 380, 406, 408, 414, 415, 446
 Hu, G., 402, 414
 Hu, L., 411, 416
 Hu, P., 102
 Hu, X., 170
 Hu, Y., 288
 Huang, B., 353
 Huang, B., 78
 Huang, G., 433
 Huang, H. M., 315
 Huang, J., 287
 Huang, J.-Q., 178
 Huang, R.-C., 243
 Huang, Z.-G., 213
 Hucklebridge, F., 109
 Hudson, J. I., 392, 393
 Huebner, R. B., 355
 Hufford, D. J., 188
 Hughes, J., 161, 238, 316, 327
 Hughes, J. R., 326
 Hughes, J. W., 125
 Hughes, T. L., 435
 Hui, K. K. S., 207
 Hui, K.-K., 207, 211
 Huibregtse, K. M. S., 315
 Huizinga, M. M., 66

Hukkelberg, S., 81
 Hulbert-Williams, N., 271
 Hulme, C., 282
 Hult, J. R., 118, 298
 Hume, R. F., 343
 Humphreys, K., 353, 440
 Humphries, K. H., 234, 235, 236
 Hunt, D., 236
 Hunt, R. H., 179
 Hunt, W. A., 327, 352, 355, 363
 Hunter, A., 73
 Hunter, D., 269
 Hunter, D. J., 257, 265
 Huntley, J. D., 282
 Huppert, F. A., 125
 Hurewitz, A., 124, 125
 Hurley, J., 151
 Hurley, S., 270
 Hurley, S. F., 331
 Hursting, S. D., 408, 415
 Hurt, R. D., 36
 Hurwitz, J. T., 217
 Husten, C., 35
 Hutchinson, A. B., 298
 Hutchinson, M. R., 161
 Huth, M. M., 211
 Hutton, B., 182, 183
 Huxley, R., 286
 Huxley, R. R., 237
 Huy, N., 138
 Hviid, A., 54
 Hyde, R. T., 404, 405, 414
 Hyland, A., 327, 328
 Hyland, N., 71, 72
 Hylton, J., 295
 Hynan, L. S., 280, 282

I
 Iadarola, M. J., 166, 174
 Iagnocco, A., 179
 Iannotti, R. J., 78
 Iber, F., 28
 Iceta, S., 388
 Ickovics, J. R., 298
 Iglesias, S. L., 120
 Igudin, I., 202
 Imori, H., 152
 Ijadunola, K. T., 297
 Ijadunola, M. Y., 297
 Ilgen, D. R., 111
 Ilies, R., 111
 Imes, R. S., 53
 Imhof, A., 345
 Inagaki, T. K., 123, 137
 Infante-Castaneda, C. B., 47, 49
 Ingargiola, M. J., 384
 Ingersoll, K. S., 71
 Inglis, N., 53, 417
 Ingraham, B. A., 266
 Iniguez, D., 432

Innes, K. E., 210, 214, 215
 Inoue, M., 147
 Inoue, S., 423
 International, A. D., 280
 Intille, S. S., 68
 Ioannidis, J. P. A., 263, 264
 Ioannidis, J. S., 31
 Ionan, A. C., 150
 Iqbal, R., 238
 Iribarren, C., 237, 241
 Irish, J., 318
 Irnich, D., 207
 Ironson, G., 298
 Ironson, G., 72, 78, 121
 Irvin, J. E., 444
 Irving, H., 343, 345
 Irwin, D. E., 47
 Irwin, M. R., 49, 137–139, 148, 201, 213, 214, 446
 Isaacs, W. B., 259
 Ishii, M., 78
 Ishikawa, T., 152
 Iskandar, S. B., 224, 236
 Islam, S., 233, 234, 238, 239
 Islam, T., 290
 Islami, F., 255
 Isler, C. M., 435
 Ismail, K., 72
 Iso, H., 238
 Israel, B., 287
 Israel, S., 142
 Ito, T., 149
 Ivanovski, B., 205, 208
 Ivers, H., 52
 Iwamoto, D. K., 340
 Izquierdo, A., 78

J
 Jack, C. R., Jr., 279
 Jacka, F. N., 165
 Jackson, A., 244
 Jackson, G., 247
 Jackson, G. F., 358
 Jackson, J. J., 72
 Jackson, J., 283
 Jackson, K. M., 340
 Jacob III, P., 322
 Jacobs, D. R. Jr., 375
 Jacobs, G. D., 120
 Jacobs, W., 53, 55
 Jacobsen, C., 287
 Jacobsen, P. B., 277
 Jacobson, E., 120, 180
 Jacobson, K. C., 117
 Jacobson, T. A., 238
 Jaffe, A., 246
 Jaffe, H. W., 298
 Jager, R. D., 320
 Jagger, C., 430
 Jahnke, R., 213, 214
 Jain, M., 331
 Jakicic, J. M., 402, 414
 Jakobsson, R., 258

Jamal, A., 311, 312
 James, J., 209
 James, P., 72
 Jamsa, T., 408, 415
 Janicki, D., 119
 Janicki, D. L., 146
 Janicki-Deverts, D., 11, 142
 Janisse, J., 343
 Jansen, S., 283
 Janssen, R. S., 298
 Jara, G., 341
 Jarbol, D. E., 47, 48
 Jarman, D. W., 343
 Jarup, L., 258
 Jarvis, M., 328
 Jarvis, M. J., 315
 Jaspers, L., 406
 Jay, S. M., 61
 Jayashree, K., 138
 Jayawant, S. S., 67, 68
 Jayes, L., 322, 323
 Jeffery, R. W., 373, 386
 Jeglic, E. L., 141
 Jeifetz, M., 120
 Jelinski, S. F., 239
 Jemal, A., 253–255, 257, 260
 Jenkins, C. D., 240
 Jenkins, E. F., 320
 Jenkins, S., 45
 Jenks, R. A., 316
 Jensen, M. D., 286
 Jensen, M. K., 379, 380
 Jensen, M. P., 164, 173, 174, 209, 210
 Jensen, T. S., 23
 Jeon, C. Y., 408, 415
 Jeon, K. C., 53, 55
 Jerone, G. J., 385
 Jessen-Fiddick, T., 182, 183
 Jha, A. P., 201
 Jiang, B., 267
 Jiang, H., 259
 Jiang, L., 236
 Jiang, R., 321
 Jiang, T., 378
 Jiang, Y., 288, 346
 Jick, H., 320, 345
 Jick, S. S., 320
 Jimenez-Ruiz, C., 322
 Jin, L., 59
 Jochum, T., 341
 Jockel, K.-H., 35
 Johansen, C., 267
 Johansen, C. B., 402
 Johansson, B., 281
 John, L. K., 80
 John, M., 71, 72, 216
 John, U., 329
 Johnsen, N. F., 408, 415
 Johnson, A., 89, 419
 Johnson, A. K., 247
 Johnson, A. M., 97
 Johnson, B. T., 298
 Johnson, C. A., 289, 316

Johnson, C. H., 296
 Johnson, E., 207, 211
 Johnson, E. C., 150
 Johnson, K. A., 320
 Johnson, K. C., 28
 Johnson, L. W., 236
 Johnson, M., 317
 Johnson, M. D., 111
 Johnson, M. L., 207
 Johnson, P. J., 215
 Johnson, R. J., 213
 Johnson, R. W., 137, 149, 160
 Johnson, S. B., 9, 251, 441
 Johnson, S. D., 297
 Johnson, W. C., 321
 Johnston, B. C., 382, 385
 Johnston, J. H., 122, 123
 Johnston, L., 61
 Johnston, L. D., 312, 314, 340, 361
 Johnstone, E., 329
 Jolanda, C. M., 409
 Jolliffe, C. D., 183
 Jolly, K., 248
 Jonas, W. B., 23, 24
 Jones, A. M., 407, 415
 Jones, B. Q., 240
 Jones, C. M., 178
 Jones, D., 31, 78
 Jones, D. L., 432
 Jones, H. U., 236
 Jones, H., 147, 241
 Jones, K., 176, 329
 Jones, K. D., 174
 Jones, M., 393
 Jones, P. J. H., 407
 Jonsson, L., 280
 Jordan, B. K., 107
 Jordan, R., 267
 Jorge, R., 280
 Jorgensen, R. B., 248
 Jorgensen, R. S., 241
 Jorgensen, T., 318
 Jose, P., 351
 Joseph, L., 202, 236, 331
 Joseph, P., 244
 Josephs, R. A., 350
 Josephson, R., 125
 Joshi, A., 360
 Joshi, M., 360
 Jou, J., 215
 Joughin, N., 390
 Jouven, X., 240
 Judge, K., 327
 Judge, P. G., 109
 Juliano, L. M., 361
 Julien, B., 388
 Julien, R. M., 177, 178, 179, 357
 Julius, H., 117
 Julnes, P. S., 177–178
 Jump, R. L., 166
 Juneau, M., 176, 177
 Juster, R. P., 102

K

Kaōpua, L. S. I., 74
 Kaaks, R., 379, 380, 408, 415
 Kabat, G. C., 323
 Kabat-Zinn, J., 124, 182, 198, 210, 214
 Kadowaki, T., 147
 Kaell, A., 124, 125
 Kahende, J. W., 321
 Kahn, D.C., 404
 Kahn, E. B., 422, 423
 Kahn, H., 404
 Kahn, J., 207, 211
 Kahokeher, A., 120
 Kaholokula, J. K., 74
 Kaiser, J., 413
 Kalichman, S. C., 295, 296, 298
 Kalichman, S., 125
 Kalin, N. H., 201
 Kalish, R., 207, 211
 Kalishman, N., 73
 Kalsekar, A., 68
 Kalter, J., 277
 Kamarck, T. W., 145, 146
 Kamarck, T., 113
 Kambouropoulos, N., 349
 Kamer, A. R., 280
 Kamiya, J., 200
 Kampert, J. B., 410, 416
 Kampman, E., 32
 Kanaan, M., 239
 Kaniasty, K., 151
 Kann, L., 313, 322, 324, 340
 Kann, L., 384
 Kanner, A. D., 113, 149
 Kantarci, K., 279
 Kanter, D., 382
 Kanters, S., 382, 385
 Kantor, L. W., 355
 Kaplan, B. H., 55
 Kaplan, B. J., 205, 216
 Kaplan, B., 278
 Kaplan, G. A., 146
 Kaplan, R., 441
 Kaplan, R. B., 178
 Kaplan, R. M., 315, 430
 Kaprio, J., 314, 373
 Kapsokefalou, M., 444
 Kaptchuk, T. J., 25, 203
 Kaptchuk, T., 23
 Kapur, S., 23
 Karageorghis, C., 417
 Karam, E., 340
 Karavidas, M. K., 210, 213
 Kardias, S. L. R., 314
 Karimi, L., 237
 Kark, J. D., 239
 Karl, A., 173
 Karlamangla, A. S., 234, 239
 Karlsson, C., 415
 Karlsson, M., 415
 Karoly, P., 174, 181, 183
 Karon, J. M., 293
 Karp, A., 281

Karp, I., 315
 Kartashov, A. I., 375
 Karter, A. J., 57
 Kashy, D., 271
 Kasim, R., 363
 Kasl, S. V., 45, 51
 Kasser, C., 341
 Kasza, K. A., 327
 Katikireddi, S. V., 97
 Kato, M., 147
 Katon, W. J., 72
 Katsiaras, A., 380
 Kattari, S. K., 295
 Katz, J., 175
 Katz, M., 280
 Katz, M. H., 295
 Katzmarzyk, P. T., 264, 405
 Katzper, M., 166
 Kaufman, E., 73
 Kaufman, M., 295
 Kaufmann, P. G., 236, 246
 Kaul, S., 382
 Kaur, A., 433
 Kauschinger, E., 432
 Kava, B. R., 270
 Kavan, M. G., 150, 246
 Kavanagh, P., 89
 Kavanah, A., 424
 Kavookjian, J., 408, 415
 Kavousi, M., 406
 Kawachi, I., 239, 325, 431
 Kawamura, N., 107, 151, 152
 Kaya, M. D., 143
 Kaye, W. H., 388
 Kaye, W., 388, 391
 Kazinets, G., 326
 Kazmi, K., 239
 Keane, T. M., 70
 Keefe, F. J., 163, 172, 176
 Keegan, T. H., 270
 Keel, P. K., 389, 390, 392
 Keeling, S., 301
 Kehoe, T., 343
 Keith, V., 203
 Keller, A., 207, 211
 Keller, M., 348, 377
 Keller, M. C., 150
 Kelley, E., 60
 Kelley, F. J., 432
 Kelley, G. A., 407
 Kelley, J. M., 25
 Kelley, K. S., 407
 Kelley, K. W., 137, 149, 150, 160
 Kelly, C. N. M., 238
 Kelly, J. A., 296
 Kelly, J. F., 353
 Kelly, K. M., 386
 Kelly, M., 72
 Kelly-Hayes, M., 240
 Keltai, M., 234, 238
 Keltner, B., 432
 Kemeny, M. E., 100, 102, 116, 139, 141, 144, 298
 Kemp, B., 119

- Kempen, G. I., 409
 Kempen, G. I. J. M., 276, 277, 283
 Kemppainen, L. M., 202
 Kemppainen, T. T., 202
 Kendall, L., 50
 Kendler, K. S., 149, 193, 444
 Kendrick, D., 320
 Kendzor, D. E., 312
 Kennedy, B., 385
 Kennedy, K., 386
 Kenny, S., 182, 183
 Kent, C., 325
 Kent, S., 72
 Keogh, E., 122, 123
 Keppell, M., 61
 Kerke, H., 406, 414
 Kerlikowske, K., 321
 Kerlikowske, R. G., 178
 Kerns, J. C., 368, 373, 376, 386
 Kerns, R. D., 16, 122, 123, 175, 182, 183
 Kerr, W. C., 343
 Kerse, N., 57
 Kershaw, T., 363
 Kersten, I. H., 413
 Kertesz, L., 31, 35
 Keskitalo-Vuokko, K., 314
 Kesmodel, U., 343
 Kessler, R. C., 151, 278, 392, 393
 Kessler, T., 232, 233
 Kesteloot, H., 237
 Ketcham, A. S., 116
 Ketcham, J. D., 66
 Kettner, N., 207
 Keune, P. M., 213, 214
 Keuroghlian, A. S., 150
 Keyes, K. M., 107
 Keys, A., 370, 388
 Keys, M., 277
 Khale, L., 267
 Khamba, B. K., 350
 Khan, C. M., 287
 Khan, N. A., 228, 234
 Kharbanda, R., 224
 Khaw, K.-T., 236, 446
 Khazeni, N., 141
 Khera, R., 384
 Khoo, B., 139
 Khoo, E. J., 321
 Khoo, E. L., 182, 183
 Khoramdad, M., 237
 Khoury, B., 395
 Kickbusch, I., 445
 Kiecolt-Glaser, J. K., 115, 138, 139, 150, 283, 344
 Kiefe, C. I., 234, 239, 241
 Kieffer, E., 287
 Kiel, D. P., 408, 415
 Kikendall, J. W., 28
 Kilgo, G., 182, 183
 Kilpatrick, M., 78
 Kim, A., 298
 Kim, C., 205
 Kim, D., 239, 325
 Kim, D. S., 148
 Kim, E., 267
 Kim, H. S., 118
 Kim, H., 166
 Kim, J. S., 411, 412, 416
 Kim, M. K., 201
 Kim, S. K., 148
 Kim, Y. S., 148
 Kimball, C. P., 13
 Kimber, M., 391
 Kimmel, S. E., 67
 Kind, S., 141
 King, A. C., 317
 King, B., 321
 King, B. A., 321, 322
 King, C. D., 166
 King, C. R., 443
 King, D., 329, 360
 King, K., 239
 King, L., 318
 King, M., 282
 King, M. E., 289
 King, N., 378
 Kinser, A. M., 409
 Kipman, A., 390
 Kipnis, V., 262
 Kirchner, T. R., 344
 Kirkeeide, R., 239
 Kirkland, S., 234, 235, 236
 Kirouac, M., 354
 Kirsch, C., 209
 Kirsch, I., 25, 201
 Kirschbaum, C., 113
 Kirtley, L.-G., 138
 Kissane, D. W., 267
 Kissane, D., 271
 Kissela, B. M., 228
 Kisslyn, S. M., 24
 Kit, B. K., 375, 379
 Kitchen, S., 384
 Kite-Powell, A., 178
 Kittleson, M. J., 298
 Kittner, S. J., 35, 228
 Kitzman, D., 386
 Kivipelto, M., 280
 Kivlinghan, K. T., 102
 Kiwanuka, J., 68
 Kiyohara, C., 321
 Klatsky, A. L., 345, 346
 Kleber, H. D., 355
 Klein, A., 217
 Klein, D. A., 417
 Klein, D. J., 297
 Klein, H., 296
 Klein, L. C., 102
 Klein, P. J., 199
 Klein, W. M., 69
 Klein-Hessling, J., 120
 Klimas, N., 122, 123, 298
 Klimas, N. G., 72
 Klobberdanz, K., 130
 Kloda, L. A., 166
 Klonoff, E. A., 110
 Klotz, J. B., 259
 Klotz, U., 179
 Kluger, R., 310
 Klumbiene, J., 327
 Klump, K. L., 392
 Klusmann, V., 84
 Knafl, K. A., 278, 279
 Knauper, B., 395
 Knez, A., 145
 Knight, S. J., 300
 Knippenberg, R. J. M., 283
 Knopman, D. S., 279
 Knott, C., 346
 Knottnerus, J. A., 183
 Knuth, N. D., 368, 373, 376, 386
 Knutson, K. L., 377
 Knuttgen, H. G., 402
 Ko, N.-Y., 296
 Kobayashi, K., 203
 Kobayashi, M., 301
 Koblin, B. A., 295, 297
 Kocak, N., 143
 Koch, D. S., 349
 Kochanek, K. D., 226, 230, 234, 319, 356
 Kocks, J., 291
 Koenig, K., 182, 183
 Koenig, W., 345
 Koeppel, R. A., 23, 24
 Koes, B. W., 208, 209
 Kofman, O., 148
 Kogan, N. M., 357
 Kohler, B. A., 255
 Kohn, L. T., 59
 Kohnke, M. D., 347
 Kok, F. J., 321
 Kok, G., 343
 Kokkotou, E., 25
 Kolata, G., 368
 Kollin, S. R., 291
 Kolodziej, M. E., 241
 Komaroff, A., 23
 Komori, Y., 301
 Kompier, M., 111
 Konkel, A., 412, 416
 Koopmans, G. T., 47
 Kop, W. J., 145, 236
 Koperdak, M., 391
 Kopnisky, K. L., 144
 Kopp, Z., 47
 Koppel, B. S., 360
 Kordonouri, O., 408, 415
 Korhonen, T., 314
 Koring, M., 84
 Korkeila, M., 373
 Korous, K. M., 147
 Korpelainen, R., 408, 415
 Koskenvuo, M., 379
 Koski-Jannes, A., 353
 Kosok, A., 355
 Koss, M. P., 108
 Kotrschal, K., 117
 Kottke, T. E., 230, 231
 Kottow, M. H., 25
 Koulis, T., 315
 Koutsy, L. A., 267
 Kovacs, R., 377

Koval, J. J., 317
 Kowal, J., 424
 Kowalczykowski, M., 25
 Kozlenko, N., 431
 Kozlov, E., 182, 183
 Kozlowski, L. T., 325
 Kraaij, V., 298
 Kraaimaat, F. W., 148
 Kraaj, V., 248
 Kraemer, H. C., 271, 393, 395
 Kraemer, H. C., 283
 Kramer, A. F., 411, 412, 416
 Kramer, C. K., 117
 Krantz, D. S., 239, 441
 Krantz, G., 112
 Krarup, L.-H., 406, 414
 Kratzer, W., 345
 Kraus, L., 349
 Kravitz, R. L., 57, 59
 Krebs, D. E., 408, 415
 Krebs, P., 277
 Kresevic, D., 207, 211
 Kreuzer, M., 322
 Krewski, D., 259
 Kreyenbuhl, J., 320
 Krieger, N., 434
 Krikorian, R., 277
 Krisanaprakornkit, T., 205, 208
 Krisanaprakornkit, W., 205, 208
 Kris-Etherton, P. M., 238
 Krishna, S., 287
 Krishnan, A., 277
 Krishnan, M., 351
 Krishnan-Sarin, S., 354
 Krishnaswami, S., 380
 Kristeller, J. L., 395
 Kristjanson, L. J., 301
 Kriston, L., 206, 208
 Kritchevsky, S. B., 380, 386
 Kromhout, D., 321, 406, 414
 Krompinger, J., 201
 Kronenfeld, J. J., 202, 203, 206
 Kronenfeld, J., 203
 Kroner-Herwig, B., 210
 Kronish, I. M., 246
 Kronish, I., 72
 Krueger, A. B., 48
 Krueger, E. A., 435
 Krupat, E., 57, 59
 Kruszon-Moran, D., 375
 Krysta, J. H., 354
 Kubzansky, L., 246
 Kuchenhoff, H., 145
 Kudlur, S., 343
 Kuendig, H., 351
 Kufmann, M., 235, 244, 246
 Kuhajda, M. C., 181
 Kuhn, C. M., 241
 Kuhn, P., 213, 214
 Kuhnel, J., 111
 Kuhns, L. M., 117
 Kuiper, N. M., 315

Kujer, R. G., 270
 Kuk, J. L., 386
 Kulka, R. A., 107
 Kulkarni, U., 382
 Kuller, L. H., 117, 238, 280
 Kumar, M., 298, 432
 Kumar, R., 79
 Kunisato, Y., 168
 Kunst, A. E., 239, 312, 327
 Kuntsche, S., 340
 Kunz, C., 354
 Kupelnick, B., 205, 208, 314
 Kupper, S., 120
 Kupperman, J., 79
 Kurinczuk, J. J., 343
 Kurland, H., 199
 Kurth, R., 173
 Kurz, J., 166, 174, 176
 Kutner, M. H., 409
 Kuykendall, D. H., 25
 Kwong, K. K., 207
 Kyngas, H., 73
 Kypri, K., 340
 Kyu, H. H., 430
 Kyvik, K. O., 377

L

La Vecchia, C., 264
 Laaksonen, M., 239
 Laarhoven, A. I. M., 148
 Laatikainen, T., 239
 Labarthe, D. R., 230, 231
 Laboy, A. F., 378
 Lac, A., 351
 Lacey, J. H., 394
 Lackland, D. T., 228
 Laden, F., 265
 Laferriere, D., 383, 385
 Lahelma, E., 377
 Lai, D. T. C., 89
 Laitinen, M. H., 280
 Lake, J., 216
 Lakhani, R., 258
 Lakka, T. A., 146, 402, 414
 Laks, J., 410, 416
 Lal, S., 205
 Lallukka, T., 377
 Lalongo, N. S., 141
 Lalota, M., 295, 297
 Lam, Y. W. F., 68
 Lam, Z., 210
 Lambert, M., 234, 235, 236
 Lambert, P. C., 288
 Lambert, S., 277
 Lambert-Porcheron, S., 388
 Lamers, L. M., 47
 Lamptey, P. R., 292
 Lan, Y.-J., 258
 Lanas, F., 145, 232, 234, 236
 Lancaster, K. L., 392
 Lancaster, T., 325, 326
 Lance, P., 28
 Landers, D. M., 410, 416
 Landolt, A. S., 210, 211
 Landon, B. E., 178
 Landrigen, P. J., 237
 Landrine, H., 110
 Lane, G., 283
 Lane, J. D., 287
 Lang, A. R., 350
 Lang, C. C., 237
 Lang, F. R., 210, 300
 Lang, U. E., 357
 Langa, K. M., 282
 Lange, T., 152
 Langenberg, C., 380
 Langer, E. J., 60, 116, 387
 Langhorne, 209, 212
 Lannin, D., 266
 Lannutti, P. J., 351
 Lanotte, M., 24
 Lansky, A., 297
 Lanza, E., 28, 30
 Lanza, S. T., 444
 Lao, L., 215
 Laopaiboon, M., 205, 208
 Lapane, K. L., 53
 LaPerriere, A., 78, 298
 Lapez-Moreno, J. A., 356
 Lappe, D. L., 236
 Large, S., 53, 417
 Largo-Wight, E., 445
 Larkey, L., 213, 214
 Larsen, P. V., 47, 48
 Larson, E. B., 282
 Laskowska, B., 258, 259, 262
 Laskowski, B., 138
 Lasser, K. E., 434, 436, 439
 Lasser, N. L., 28
 Last, J. M., 29
 Latimer, R., 74
 Latreille, B., 258
 Lau, A. S.
 Lau, D. T., 178
 Laubmeier, K. K., 270
 Lauche, R., 125
 Laudenslager, M. L., 136, 138
 Lauerma, J., 268
 Laughlin, M. E., 404
 Launer, L. J., 280
 Lauque, D., 174
 Laurenceau, J.-P., 240, 268
 Laurent, M. R., 53
 Lauritsen, K. J., 355, 390
 Lauritzen, T., 354
 Lautenschlager, N. T., 412, 416
 Lavalley, L. F., 124, 125
 Laveda, R., 72
 LaVeist, T. A., 432
 Laverty, A. A., 382
 Lavery, M., 328
 Lavie, C. J., 405, 420
 Lavigne, J., 148
 Lavoie, M., 388
 Lavin, R., 166

- Lavizzo, E. A., 151
 Law, E. F., 182, 183
 Lawler, P. R., 248
 Lawless, R. M., 56
 Lawlor, D. A., 410
 Lawman, H. G., 375
 Lawrence, D., 320
 Lawson, S. A., 432
 Lawton, R. J., 80
 Layton, J. B., 33, 114
 Laytragoon-Lewin, N., 320
 Lazar, S. W., 201
 Lazarou, J., 59
 Lazarus, R. S., 103, 105, 106, 113, 117, 149
 Lazovich, D., 266
 Le Grange, D., 391, 393
 Le Parc, J.-M., 171
 Le Roux, P., 441
 Leach, M. J., 202, 203
 Leachman, S. A., 265
 Leahey, T. M., 79
 Leake, H., 51
 Leanza, Y., 57, 141
 Leape, L. L., 59, 60
 Lear, S. A., 238
 Leary, M. R., 160
 Leas, E. C., 322
 Leask, J., 54
 Leatherdale, S. T., 72
 Leavy, J. E., 421
 Lebovits, A., 180, 206, 211
 Lechner, S. C., 120
 Lechner, S., 78, 122, 123, 139, 270
 Leddy, J. J., 378
 Ledeboer, A., 161
 Lee, A., 258
 Lee, C. M., 351
 Lee, C. S., 340
 Lee, C.-W., 321
 Lee, D. R., 348
 Lee, G. L., 277
 Lee, H. H., 434
 Lee, H. S., 364
 Lee, I.-M., 406, 407, 414, 418
 Lee, L., 315
 Lee, L. M., 293
 Lee, M. C., 217
 Lee, M. S., 201, 207, 211, 213, 214
 Lee, P. N., 323
 Lee, P. R., 348
 Lee, P., 348
 Lee, S., 277
 Lee, T. H., 437, 438, 440
 Lee, W. J., 407, 415
 Lee, Y., 207, 211
 Leeks, K. D., 422
 Leeuw, M., 165, 171, 182
 Lefevre, H., 423
 Leger, D., 377
 Lehman, D. R., 378
 Lehrer, P. M., 210
 Leibowitz, K. A., 58
 Leigh, R., 413
 Leighton, J. C., 270
 Leineweber, C., 239
 Leinhard, O. D., 373
 Leinsalu, M., 327
 Leistner, D., 145
 Lemaitre, R. N., 238
 Lemaitre, R., 240
 LeMaster, J. W., 408, 415
 Lemberg, R., 390
 Lembo, A. J., 25
 Lemer, C., 60
 Lemstra, M., 363
 Lennie, T. A., 72
 Lennon, L., 239
 Lenssinck, M.-L. B., 208
 Lenz, C., 357
 Leo, R. J., 206, 208
 Leon, A. S., 406, 407, 415
 Leon, C., 190
 Leon, M., 313
 Leonardi, M., 142
 Leonardi-Bee, J., 322, 327
 Leong, D., 244
 Leonido-Yee, M., 357
 Lepore, S. J., 123, 124, 125, 147, 241
 Leppaluoto, J., 408, 415
 Lepper, H. S., 65, 72
 Lerman, C., 316
 Lerner, A. J., 281
 Lerner, J. E., 47, 49
 Leroux, B. G., 315
 Leserman, J., 72, 150
 Lestideau, O. T., 124, 125
 Letourneau, E. G., 259
 Leucht, S., 354
 Leuchter, A. F., 206, 392
 Levenson, J. L., 145
 Levenson, R. W., 117, 349
 Levenson, R. W., 349
 Levenstein, S., 14, 147
 Leventhal, E. A., 47, 50
 Leventhal, H., 316
 Leventhal, H., 47, 50, 51, 55
 Levi, F., 264
 Levi, L., 140
 Levin, T., 267
 Levine, J. M., 344
 Levine, M. R., 181, 183
 Levinson, W., 59
 Levy, D., 34, 231, 232, 377
 Levy, M. L., 108
 Levy, M. N., 228
 Levy, S., 358
 Lew, J. F., 89
 Lewandowska, A. M., 258, 259, 262
 Lewandowski, T., 258, 259, 262
 Lewer, D., 97
 Lewing, B., 215
 Lewis, B. P., 102
 Lewis, B., 178
 Lewis, C. E., 240
 Lewis, C. S., 151
 Lewis, D. C., 355
 Lewis, D. R., 255
 Lewis, E. T., 178
 Lewis, J. E., 270
 Lewis, M., 207
 Lewis, O., 108
 Lewis, S. J., 343
 Lewith, G., 207
 Leyland, K. M., 380
 Leyro, T. M., 363
 Li, C., 445
 Li, G., 217, 288, 380
 Li, H., 288
 Li, J. M., 59
 Li, J., 47, 206
 Li, L., 203
 Li, M., 207
 Li, M.-D., 207, 211
 Li, P., 213
 Li, Q.-Z., 213
 Li, W., 240
 Li, Y., 263, 312, 345
 Li, Y.-H., 213
 Liang, S., 203
 Liang, W., 345
 Liang, X., 287
 Liao, Y., 68
 Libersan, D., 234, 235, 236
 Lichtenstein, A. H., 238
 Lichtenstein, B., 297
 Lichter, E. L., 108
 Lichtman, J. H., 228
 Lidfors, L., 117
 Lieberman, J. A., 23
 Lieberman, M. A., 270
 Lieberman, M. D., 123, 160
 Liechti, M. E., 357
 Liechty, J. M., 388
 Liel-Cohen, N., 248
 Lien, L. F., 385
 Light, J. M., 315
 Light, K. C., 142
 Ligier, S., 148
 Ligor, J. S. A. Jr., 206, 208
 Likopa, Z., 47, 49
 Li-Korotky, H. S., 142
 Lillie-Blanton, M., 432
 Lim, A. C., 354
 Lim, C., 313
 Limburg, P. J., 263
 Lin, E. H. B., 72
 Lin, J., 142
 Lin, M., 151
 Lin, N., 411, 416
 Lin, P.-H., 383
 Lin, V., 195, 202
 Lincoln, K. D., 119
 Lind, O., 72
 Lindahl, M., 406, 414
 Linde, K., 204, 206, 207, 208, 211
 Linden, D. E. J., 209
 Linden, W., 242
 Lindstrom, H. A., 281
 Linet, M. S., 260
 Link, M. S., 418
 Linn, S., 198, 205, 208

Linseisen, J., 379, 380
 Linton, S. J., 165, 171, 182
 Lints-Martindale, A. C., 176
 Liou, K. T., 216
 Lippi, G., 418
 Lippke, S., 78, 84
 Lipsey, T. L., 151
 Lipton, R. B., 170, 171, 280
 Liria, A. F., 151
 Lisheng, L., 145, 232, 234, 236, 237
 Lissner, L., 379
 Lister, J., 178
 Litscher, G., 215
 Litten, R. Z., 352
 Litz, B. T., 122, 123
 Liu, B., 285
 Liu, C., 267
 Liu, F., 345
 Liu, J., 68, 207
 Liu, K., 237, 239, 241, 243, 282
 Liu, K. S., 78
 Liu, L., 238, 240, 267
 Liu, S., 207
 Liu, X., 289
 Liu, Y., 234, 239
 Livingston, J. A., 344
 Livingstone-Banks, J., 328
 Livneh, H., 116
 Livneh, H., 277, 300
 Llabre, M. M., 241
 Lloyd, C. E., 72
 Lloyd-Jones, D. M., 228
 Lloyd-Richardson, E., 315
 Lloyd-Williams, M., 277
 Lo, B., 53
 Lo, H. C., 248
 Lo, J. C., 237
 Lobo, A., 345
 Locher, J. L., 378
 Lock, K., 238, 263
 Locke, J., 391
 Lockenhoff, C. E., 182, 183
 Loeser, J. D., 23
 Lofgren, I. E., 444
 Lofgren, S., 320
 Logan, D. E., 166
 Loggia, M. L., 176, 177
 Logroscino, G., 244, 320
 Lohaus, A., 120
 Lohr, K. N., 208
 Loken, B., 422
 Lokken, R. P., 408, 415
 Loncaric, D., 119
 Londei, A., 201
 Long, H., 345
 Long, L. J., 269
 Longabaugh, R., 363
 Longman, R. S., 413
 Longstreth, W. T., 238
 Loomba, R., 384
 Lopez, A. D., 261
 Lopez, C., 122, 123
 Lopez-Jaramillo, P., 238

Lopiano, L., 24
 Lores Arnais, M. R., 120
 Loria, C. M., 383, 385
 Losby, J., 178
 Loscalzo, M. J., 433
 Lott, S. M., 116
 Lotta, L. A., 380
 Louie, J. Y., 118
 Louise, W., 189, 190
 Loukissa, D. A., 283
 Loukola, A., 314
 Loving, T. J., 138
 Low, C. A., 124, 125
 Lowery, R., 313
 Lowes, L., 286
 Lowman, C., 352
 Lowy, R., 384
 Lozano, P. V., 329
 Lu, H., 234, 239
 Lu, J., 32
 Lu, Q., 124, 125
 Lu, Z., 345
 Luben, R., 236, 446
 Lubin, J. H., 259
 Luborsky, L., 150
 Lucas, A. E. M., 440
 Lucaspolomeni, M.-M., 209
 Luce, D., 35
 Luce, K. H., 393
 Luders, E., 201
 Ludman, E., 72
 Ludvigsson, J., 147, 287
 Ludwig, D. S., 375
 Lui, C.-W., 202
 Lund, E., 264
 Lundahl, B., 89
 Lundahl, B. W., 354
 Lundberg, B., 298
 Lundberg, U., 112
 Luo, X., 171
 Lupien, S. J., 102
 Luqman-Arafath, T. K., 244
 Lurie, N., 57, 58, 74
 Lüscher, J., 327
 Lustig, A. P., 278
 Lustman, P. J., 287
 Luszczynska, A., 78
 Lutfey, K. E., 66
 Lutgendorf, S., 268, 271, 298
 Lutz, A., 201
 Lv, C.-S., 213
 Lycett, D., 329
 Lydston, D., 78
 Lyles, C. R., 57
 Lynch, F., 393, 395
 Lynch, C. F., 259, 267
 Lynch, J. W., 146
 Lyne, P., 286
 Lynn, H., 148
 Lynskey, M., 363
 Lyon, J. L., 259
 Lytle, B. L., 239
 Lyubomirsky, S., 123, 125
 Lyvers, M., 344
 Lyytikainen, P., 377

M

Ma, J., 255
 Mabuchi, K., 260
 MacAllister, R. J., 224
 MacCallum, R. C., 138, 283
 Maccarrone, M., 348
 MacCluer, J. W., 405
 MacCoon, D., 201
 MacDonald, G., 160
 MacDougall, J. M., 241
 Macek, P., 119
 Macera, C. A., 417
 Macfarlane, D. J., 423
 MacGregor, M. W., 246
 Machan, J., 385
 Macias, S. R., 73
 Macias-Islas, M., 170–171
 Macie, C., 385
 Maciejewski, P. K., 301
 MacInnis, R. J., 380, 386
 MacIntyre, P. D., 247
 Mack, K. A., 297
 MacKellar, D. A., 295, 297
 Mackenbach, J. P., 239
 Mackenbach, J. P., 327
 MacKenzie, B. A., 321
 MacKenzie, E. J., 173
 Macko, R., 264
 MacLean, D., 246
 MacLeod, A. K., 117
 MacLeod, C. M., 350
 Macleod, R., 301
 MacPherson, H., 206–208, 412
 Macrodimitis, S. D., 288
 Madden, P. A. F., 314
 Madden, V. J., 164
 Maddison, R., 423
 Maddox, T. M., 432
 Madill, A., 278
 Madry, L., 151
 Madsen, K. M., 54
 Maes, S., 248
 Maessen, M. F. H., 383, 384
 Mafi, J. N., 178
 Magaret, A., 145
 Magee, M., 378
 Magill, M., 353
 Magkos, F., 375
 Magura, S., 353
 Mah, J., 71
 Mahajan, A., 388
 Mahar, M., 439
 Maher, C. G., 175
 Mahon, M. J., 52
 Maier, S. F., 136, 137, 139, 161
 Maiman, J. M., 375
 Main, C. J., 180
 Mainous, A. G. III, 57
 Maisto, S. A., 354, 363
 Maizels, M., 179

- Maizes, V., 217
 Majundar, S. R., 65
 Makary, M., 59, 215
 Ma-Kellams, C., 301
 Makris, N., 207
 Malaguti, A., 87
 Malarcher, A., 35, 311
 Malarcher, A. M., 35
 Malarkey, W. B., 138
 Malecka-Tendera, E., 285
 Malhi, G. S., 205, 208
 Malhotra, M. R., 446
 Malila, N., 28, 30
 Mallal, S., 71, 72
 Mallet, C., 248
 Malow, R. M., 122, 123, 139, 298
 Mamun, A. A., 375
 Manchikanti, K. N., 178
 Manchikanti, L., 178
 Mancini, A. D., 301, 302
 Mandayam, S., 342
 Mandel, J. S., 71
 Manheimer, E., 207, 211, 215
 Manimala, M. R., 60
 Mann, D. M., 51, 72
 Mann, J. D., 182
 Mann, K., 355
 Mann, T. L., 88
 Mann, T., 84, 152
 Manna, A., 201
 Manne, S. L., 271
 Manni, L., 207
 Manning, W. G., 47
 Manolikos, C., 71, 72
 Manolio, T. A., 238
 Manor, O., 239
 Mansell, C., 71
 Manske, S., 324
 Manson, J. E., 117, 232, 238, 257, 286, 406, 414, 418
 Manson, S. M., 74
 Mantell, J. E., 293
 Mantero-Atienza, E., 358
 Mantzari, E., 80, 89
 Manuck, S. B., 141, 144
 Manwaring, J. L., 393
 Manzoni, G. M., 383
 Mao, J. J., 203
 Mao, X., 145
 Marchand, S., 161, 176
 Marcos, G., 345
 Marcus, D. A., 170
 Marcus, M. D., 393
 Margolis, R. D., 362
 Marhefka, S. L., 71
 Maria, A. J., 354
 Mariani, R. A., 213, 214
 Marine, C., 174
 Marinho, R. P., 248
 Mariotto, A. B., 172
 Marisavljovich, D., 148
 Mark, D. B., 239, 240
 Markovitz, J. H., 240, 241
 Marlatt, G. A., 349, 354, 355
 Marlatt, G. A., 423
 Marmar, C. R., 151
 Marmot, M., 281, 320
 Maron, B. J., 418
 Maron, D. D., 198, 205, 208
 Marques, L., 389
 Marquez, D., 411, 416
 Marquez, S., 390
 Marquie, L., 174
 Marsee, M. A., 107
 Marshall, J., 120
 Marshall, P., 47
 Marsland, A. L., 117, 141, 142, 144
 Marteau, T. M., 89
 Martelin, T., 239, 434
 Marti, C. N., 316, 389, 393
 Martikainen, P., 434
 Martin, A., 209
 Martin, A. A., 378
 Martin, C. S., 348
 Martin, J., 150
 Martin, M., 417
 Martin, N. G., 314
 Martin, P. D., 47, 115
 Martin, P. R., 182, 183, 356
 Martin, R., 50, 51, 55
 Martin, T. M., 240
 Martin, V. T., 166
 Martindale, D., 215
 Martinez, F. D., 290
 Martinez, M. E., 270
 Martinez, O. P., 71, 72
 Martins, I. J., 280
 Martins, R. K., 89
 Martins, R. N., 280
 Martins, T., 47, 48
 Martinsen, E. W., 410
 Martire, L. M., 278
 Marucha, P. T., 138
 Marzolini, S., 248
 Mash, D. C., 358
 Mashal, N. M., 137
 Masheb, R. M., 393, 395
 Masiero, M., 69
 Maskrey, V., 326
 Maslov, P. Z., 420
 Mason, J. W., 105
 Mason, M. J., 315
 Mason, P., 168
 Mason, R. A., 345
 Masse, L. C., 408, 415
 Massman, P. J., 281
 Masten, C. L., 160
 Masters, K. S., 441
 Masui, S., 327
 Matarazzo, J. D., 13, 16
 Mathers, M. I., 430
 Mathew, A. R., 328
 Mathew, G., 343
 Mathew, J., 238
 Mathur, M. B., 141
 Mathur, R., 97
 Matiello, A., 408, 415
 Matley, S. L., 50
 Matsudo, S., 423
 Matsumoto, I., 357
 Matsuoka, H., 280
 Matt, G. E., 322
 Mattar, S. G., 384
 Matthews, A., 433
 Matthews, J. P., 331
 Matthews, K., 241
 Matthews, K. A., 48, 109, 117, 145, 234, 239, 240, 241
 Mattlar, C.-E., 379
 Mattson, C. L., 178
 Matud, M. P., 119
 Mau, M. K., 74
 Maurer, D., 378
 Mausbach, B. T., 283
 Mavaddat, N., 258
 Maxwell, C. J., 239
 Maxwell, M., 271
 May, A. M., 423
 Mayeaux, R., 279
 Mayer, J., 443
 Mayer, M., 290
 Mayfield, D., 344
 Mayne, S., 266
 Mayo, R., 73
 Mayo-Smith, M. F., 341
 Mazas, C. A., 312
 Mazas, C., 444
 Mazerolle, L., 363
 Maziak, W., 321
 Mazur, A., 285
 McAfee, T., 326
 McAlindon, T., 207, 211
 McAteer, J., 88
 McAuley, E., 411, 416
 McAuley, J. H., 175
 McBride, S. M., 341
 McCabe, S. E., 435
 McCaffrey, F., 147
 McCalla, J. R., 441
 McCallie, M. S., 120, 180
 McCallion, E., 355
 McCarberg, B., 179, 180
 McCarl, L. A., 72
 McCarter, D. F., 291
 McCarthy, E. P., 178, 202, 206
 McCarthy, J., 54
 McCarty, F., 244, 298
 McCaskill, C. C., 287
 McCauley, E., 278, 279
 McCeney, K. T., 239
 McClain, T., 267
 McClay, J., 150
 McClelland, L., 390
 McClement, S., 301
 McClure, J. B., 441
 McColl, K. E. L., 259
 McConnell, R., 290
 McCorkle, R., 150
 McCracken, L. M., 182, 183
 McCrae, R. R., 72

- McCulloch, M., 345
 McCullough, M. E., 120
 McCullough, M. L., 244
 McCully, S. N., 53, 72, 79
 McDaniel, S. H., 441
 McDonald, H. P., 89
 McDonnell, D. D., 326
 McDonough, M., 351
 McDowell, J. E., 413, 416
 McEachan, R. R. C., 80
 McEntee, M. L., 177–178
 McEvedy, S. M., 383
 McEwen, A., 317
 McEwen, B. S., 102, 103, 104, 150
 McFarland, W., 295
 McFarlin, B. K., 408
 McGee, D. L., 380
 McGeown, L. M., 391, 394
 McGovern, F., 317
 McGowan, B., 282
 McGrady, A., 210, 213
 McGrath, J., 234, 235, 236
 McGregor, A., 47
 McGregor, B., 122, 123, 139
 McGregor, B. A., 271
 McGuire, B. E., 175
 McGuire, L., 138, 139, 283
 McGuire, L. C., 283
 McHugh, M. D., 390
 McIntosh, C. N., 430
 McIntosh, D. N., 107
 McKay, D., 349
 McKay, J. R., 150, 355
 McKay, K. M., 441
 McKechnie, R., 301
 McKee, M., 238, 244, 263
 McKee, S. A., 327, 328
 McKeel, D. W., 282
 McKenna, M., 317
 McKenzie, J., 142
 McKeown, M. J., 160
 McKinnon, E., 71, 72
 McKnight-Eily, L. R., 377
 McLean, G., 423
 McLean, S., 161
 McLean, S. A., 375, 383, 387
 McLellan, A. T., 324, 355
 McManus, T., 313, 384
 McManus, V., 288
 McMorris, C. A., 413
 McMurdo, M., 410
 McNallan, S. M., 36
 McNally, R. J., 151
 McNeil, D. W., 89
 McNeill, A., 321, 327
 McPherson-Baker, S., 72
 McPhillips, T., 71, 73, 88, 89
 McQuaid, E. L., 71
 McQueen, M., 145, 232, 234, 236
 McQueen, M. J., 238
 Mcquillan, J., 148
 McReynolds, C. J., 389
 McRobbie, H., 317
 McSherry, W., 174, 176
 McTiernan, A., 264
 McVey, D., 81
 McWilliams, J. M., 56
 McWilliams, L. A., 165
 Mead, G. E., 410
 Meadows-Oliver, M., 148
 Mechanic, D., 49
 Mechoulam, R., 357
 Medoff, D. R., 320
 Meeks, M. C., 147
 Meenagh, G., 179
 Meeran, K., 139
 Mehler, P. S., 392
 Mehmood, S., 117
 Mehring, M., 207, 211
 Mehta, K. M., 280
 Mehta, P., 423
 Meichenbaum, D., 121, 181
 Meier, P., 205
 Meinschmidt, G., 113
 Meints, S. M., 165
 Melamed, B., 441
 Melamed, B. G., 278
 Melander, A., 72
 Melbourne, J., 341
 Melbye, M., 54
 Melchart, D., 204
 Mellins, C., 68
 Melnichenko, A. A., 234
 Meltzer, D. O., 59
 Meltzer, L. R., 316
 Melville, J., 355
 Melzack, R., 158, 161, 163, 167–169, 173–175, 177
 Memon, M. A., 209
 Mendelson, J. E., 68
 Mendelson, M., 175
 Mendes, W. B., 117
 Meng, X., 263, 264
 Menke, T. J., 25
 Mennis, J., 315
 Menon, M., 166, 174m 176
 Mensah, G. A., 236, 432
 Mente, A., 244
 Menvielle, G., 35
 Menzie, N. S., 316
 Merali, Z., 150
 Mercado, A. M., 138
 Mercante, J. P. P., 179
 Mercken, L., 315
 Merletti, F., 35
 Mermelstein, R., 113
 Merrill, R. M., 248, 253
 Merritt, M. M., 146
 Messaoudi, I., 346
 Messer, K., 316
 Messier, S. P., 386
 Metlay, J. P., 66, 67
 Metting, E., 291
 Metzke, C. W., 119
 Metzler, T., 151
 Meulders, A., 164
 Meulman, J., 248
 Meunier, S. A., 181, 183
 Meuwly, N., 102
 Meyer, C., 329
 Meyer, J. S., 109
 Meyer, R. A., 158
 Meyer, T., 411
 Meyerowitz, B. E., 16
 Meyers, J. E., 175
 Meyrieux, A., 283
 Mialhe, F. L., 87
 Micek, K. A., 362
 Michael, K. C., 108, 254
 Michal, M., 209
 Michaud, D. S., 259
 Michelini, G., 69
 Michie, S., 88, 246
 Michultka, D., 209
 Mickelsen, O., 370, 388
 Miczek, K. A., 348
 Midtgaard, J., 408, 416
 Miech, R. A., 312, 314
 Mieler, W. F., 320
 Miettinen, O., 345
 Miglioretti, D. L., 211
 Miki, A., 152
 Milam, J. E., 298
 Milan, S., 298
 Milat, A. J., 423
 Miles, L., 407, 415
 Miligi, L., 258
 Mill, J., 150
 Miller, A., 331
 Miller, A. H., 139
 Miller, A. L., 68
 Miller, D. B., 114
 Miller, E. N., 357
 Miller, F. G., 24, 25
 Miller, G. E., 77, 110, 137–141, 148, 236, 240, 278
 Miller, J. P., 282
 Miller, J. W., 320
 Miller, K., 57
 Miller, K. D., 257
 Miller, L., 205, 208
 Miller, M., 320
 Miller, M. E., 386
 Miller, M. M., 165
 Miller, M. R., 59
 Miller, P. H., 413, 416
 Miller, P., 340, 343
 Miller, V. A., 72
 Miller, W. R., 66, 89, 354
 Miller, Y. D., 213, 214
 Milligan, E. D., 161
 Milling, L. S., 181, 183, 201, 210, 211
 Mills, E. G., 139
 Mills, E. J., 382, 385
 Milne, B. J., 239
 Milsom, I., 47
 Miltenberger, R., 391
 Mimiaga, M. J., 72
 Mingote, C., 151

- Miniño, A.M., 8
 Miotto, A., 354
 Mislowack, A., 57
 Misumoto, Y., 314
 Mitchell, B. D., 405
 Mitchell, H., 148
 Mitchell, J. E., 391, 392
 Mitchell, M., 61
 Mitchell, M. S., 80, 403
 Mitchell, P., 246
 Mitchell, W., 296
 Mitrou, F., 320
 Mittleman, M. A., 239, 418
 Mittring, N., 217
 Miyazaki, T., 152
 Mizrahi, R., 280
 Mo, X., 287
 Moak, Z. B., 115
 Moats, C., 346
 Moatti, J.-P., 262
 Mobbs, D., 69
 Mochly-Rosen, D., 345
 Mock, J., 175
 Moeller, T., 408, 416
 Moen, P., 111
 Moerman, D., 23, 24
 Moffet, H. H., 57
 Moffitt, T. E., 142, 150, 239
 Mohapatra, S., 345
 Mohebbi, M. H., 53
 Moher, D., 31
 Mohr, C., 350
 Moja, L., 172
 Mokdad, A. H., 290
 Moldovan, A. R., 383
 Molinari, E., 383
 Molinie, F., 35
 Molitor, D., 31
 Molla, M. T., 431, 432
 Molloy, G. J., 72, 73
 Moltz, K., 72, 73
 Monahan, J. L., 351
 Mondo, C., 238
 Mondon, S., 327
 Mondraty, N., 388
 Monga, D. K., 178
 Mongan, J. J., 437, 438, 440
 Monninkhof, E., 408, 415
 Monninkhof, E. M., 423
 Monroe, S. M., 112, 149
 Mons, U., 312
 Monshouwer, K., 316
 Montag, C., 413
 Montanari, M., 172
 Monteleone, A. M., 391, 393
 Monteleone, P., 391, 393
 Montgomery, G. H., 287
 Montgomery, G. W., 314
 Montori, V. M., 263
 Montplaisir, J., 377
 Monzillo, P., 170–171
 Moon, Y. P., 411, 416
 Moonesinghe, R., 431, 432
 Moons, K. G. M., 379, 380
 Moore, J., 292, 349, 384
 Moore, L. A., 74
 Moore, L. J., 105
 Moore, L. L., 244
 Moore, S. C., 343
 Moores, G., 289
 Moorey, S., 269
 Moorman, J. E., 289
 Moos, B. S., 345
 Moos, R. H., 276, 345, 440
 Mora, P. A., 50
 Moradi, T., 285
 Moraes, H., 410, 416
 Moran, J., 71
 Moreland, R. L., 344
 Moreno, G., 356
 Morgan, M., 271
 Morgan, N., 201
 Morgan, W., 416
 Morgan, W. P., 411, 417
 Morillo, L. E., 170–171
 Morimoto, H. K., 138
 Morisky, D. M., 298
 Morita, A., 314
 Morita, T., 301, 327
 Morley, K. I., 363
 Morley, S., 175, 180
 Morrell, J. S., 444
 Morrill, B., 209
 Morris, J. C., 282
 Morris, J. N., 404
 Morris, L. J., 72
 Morris, R., 239
 Morris, R. G., 413
 Morrison, A. C., 345
 Morrison, E. L., 374
 Morrison, R. S., 165, 166
 Morrow, J. D., 142
 Mortimer, J., 281
 Morton, J. M., 384
 Morton, R., 388
 Moscone, F., 430
 Moseley, G. L., 164
 Moseley, J. B., 25
 Moser, D. K., 72
 Moser, J., 348
 Moser, R. P., 248
 Mosimann, J. E., 375
 Moskovich, J., 357
 Moskowitz, J. M., 326
 Moskowitz, J. T., 118, 278, 293, 298
 Moss-Morris, R., 270
 Mostofsky, E., 242
 Motivala, S. J., 148, 446
 Motl, R. W., 411, 416
 Mottet, L., 435
 Mottillo, S., 236
 Mouren, M. C., 390
 Moussavi, S., 72
 Mouttapa, M., 316
 Mowery, P., 317
 Moxham, T., 248
 Moyer, A., 149
 Moyer, C. A., 195
 Mozaffarian, D., 238
 Mozffarian, D., 346
 Muckelbauer, R., 408, 415
 Muecke, M., 296
 Mueller, C. W., 74
 Mueller, G., 357, 358
 Muhajarine, N., 423
 Muhlestein J. B., 236
 Muhlneckel, W., 173
 Muka, T., 406
 Mukamal, K. J., 345, 346
 Muke, R., 321
 Muldoon, A. L., 117
 Muldoon, M. F., 145
 Muller, C. P., 362
 Muller-Riemenschneider, F., 405, 406, 422
 Mulvaney, C., 320
 Mumma, M. T., 259
 Munafo, M., 329
 Munce, S., 150
 Munoz, R. F., 122, 123
 Munoz-Perez, M. J., 53
 Muntner, P., 72
 Murad, M. H., 384
 Murase, N., 423
 Murphy, J. D., 270
 Murphy, J. G., 29, 30
 Murphy, J. K., 147
 Murphy, L. B., 178
 Murphy, M. H., 244, 402, 406, 414, 419, 329
 Murphy, P., 175
 Murphy, S., 433
 Murphy, S. L., 226, 230, 234, 319, 356
 Murray, C. J. L., 261, 430, 346
 Murray, E., 53
 Murray, J., 343
 Murray, J. A., 277, 278, 300, 301
 Murtagh, E. M., 244, 402, 406, 414, 419
 Murtaugh, M. A., 262
 Murthy, P., 343
 Musante, L., 147
 Mussolino, M. E., 236
 Must, A., 376
 Mustanski, B. S., 295
 Muthen, B. O., 340
 Muthen, L. K., 340
 Mutti, S., 317
 Myasoedove, V. A., 234
 Myers, J., 405
 Myers, M. G., 322
 Myers, T. C., 391
 Myers, V., 385
 Myerscough, R., 125
 Mytton, O. T., 60
 Myung, S.-K., 326

N

- Naar-King, S., 72, 73
 Naglieri, J. A., 413, 416
 Nahin, R. L., 166, 170, 187, 189–191, 193, 196, 202, 203, 215
 Nahin, R. R., 194
 Naimi, T., 345

- Naimi, T. S., 343
 Naishadham, D., 253, 254
 Naji, F., 382, 385
 Nakai, Y., 259
 Nakamura, M., 327
 Nakamura, Y., 158
 Nakazawa, T., 147
 Naliboff, B. D., 144
 Nambi, V., 345
 Nanchahal, K., 237
 Nannapaneni, U., 363
 Nansel, T. R., 78
 Nansera, D., 68
 Napadow, V., 207
 Naparstek, B., 207, 211
 Napoles, A. M., 97
 Napoli, A. M., 47
 Nardo, D., 201
 Naredo, E., 179
 Narula, J., 420
 Nash, D. B., 57
 Nash, J. M., 143, 182, 183, 441
 Nassar, N., 343
 Nassiri, M., 113
 Nast, I., 113
 Natale-Pereira, A., 56
 Nathan, A., 424
 Nathan, P. J., 149
 Nausheen, B., 270
 Navara, K., 393
 Navarro, M., 356
 Nawaz, A., 384
 Naylor, R. T., 120
 Nazar, M. I., 329
 Neal, J. J., 293
 Neal, R. D., 271
 Neale, J. M., 143
 Neaton, J. D., 243
 Nebeling, B., 358
 Nebeling, L., 248
 Nechaber, A. J., 166, 174, 176
 Neff, L., 311, 312
 Neff, R., 345
 Negri, E., 264
 Nehl, E., 79
 Neil, H. A. W., 237
 Neilands, T. B., 315
 Nelson, D. E., 343
 Nelson, H. D., 320
 Nelson, L. D., 374
 Nelson, R. J., 139
 Nelson, W. G., 259
 Nemeroff, C. J., 50
 Nerurkar, A., 203, 216
 Nes, L. S., 118
 Ness, E. M., 237
 Nestle, M., 376
 Nestoriuc, Y., 209
 Netterstrom, B., 112
 Nettles, C. D., 138
 Netz, Y., 411, 416
 Neubauer, R., 341
 Neubert, J. K., 166
 Neudorf, C., 363
 Neumark-Sztainer, D. R., 384, 388
 Neumark-Sztainer, D., 389
 Neupert, S. D., 109
 Nevill, A. M., 244, 402, 406, 414, 419
 Neville, L. M., 423
 Nevitt, M. C., 320
 Nevitt, M., 380
 Newcomb, C. W., 66, 67
 Newhouse, J. P., 56
 Newlin, D. B., 349
 Newman, A. B., 380
 Newman, J., 349
 Newman, S. P., 88
 Newton, R. U., 277
 Newton, T. L., 138
 Newton-John, T. R., 181
 Ney, J. P., 177–178
 Ng, B. H. P., 205, 208
 Ng, C. S., 210
 Ng, J. Y. Y., 248
 Ng, S.-M., 49, 208
 Ngandu, T., 280
 Ng-Mak, D. S., 108
 Nguyen, L. T., 203
 Niaura, R., 240, 315
 Nicassio, P. M., 16
 Nicholas, B. J., 386
 Nicholas, A. S., 383
 Nicholas, M. K., 183
 Nichols, W. P., 298
 Nicholson, R. A., 182, 183
 Nicoll, R. A., 358
 Nied, R. J., 409
 Nielsen, G., 262
 Nielsen, P. J., 408, 415
 Nielsen, S., 390
 Nielsen, T. S., 109
 Nielsen-Bohlman, L. T., 432
 Niemann, L., 205, 208
 Nierenberg, B., 432
 Nieva, G., 327
 Nigg, C. R., 411, 416
 Nijhuis, J., 343
 Nikendei, C., 390
 Niknejad, B., 182, 183
 Nikolajsen, L., 173
 Nilsson, A., 117
 Nilsson, J. L. G., 72
 Nishimura, T., 213, 214
 Nissinen, A., 239, 280, 402, 414
 Niswender, K. D., 379
 Nitzschke, K., 422
 Nivison, M. E., 109
 Noble, D. J., 60
 Noble, L. M., 88
 Nocon, M., 405, 406, 422
 Noda, M., 147
 Noel, N. E., 351
 Noel, P. H., 277
 Nogueira Alves, J. F., 417
 Nohe, A., 266
 Nolan, D., 280
 Nolen-Hoeksema, S., 149
 Nomura, M., 314
 Norat, T., 32
 Norcross, J. C., 81, 82, 244
 Nordin, K., 269
 Nordstrom, A., 415
 Nordstrom, P., 415
 Noriega, V., 116
 Norman, J., 246
 Norman, P., 51, 288
 Norman, T. R., 149
 Normand, A.-C., 290
 Norris, C., 234–236
 Norris, E., 328
 Norris, F. H., 151
 Northrup, T. F., 322
 Norton, W. E., 74
 Nostlinger, C., 296
 Nothlings, U., 408, 415
 Notley, C., 326
 Nouwen, A., 72
 Novack, D. H., 14
 Novak, M. A., 109
 Novak, S., 315
 Novelli, M., 383
 Novins, D. K., 74
 Novotni, A., 108
 Nowson, C., 213, 214
 Nowson, C. A., 380, 386
 Nugent, W. R., 328
 Numminen, P., 407, 415
 Nunes, M., 179
 Nunes, S. O. V., 138
 Nunez, L., 170–171
 Nunez-Smith, M., 315
 Nussbeck, F. W., 102
 Nusselder, W., 430
 Nyberg, F., 35, 258
 Nygard, J. F., 329
 Nyquist, F., 415

O

- O'Brien, C. P., 355
 O'Brien, C. W., 269
 O'Brien, J., 423
 O'Brien, P. E., 377
 O'Carroll, R. E., 72, 81
 O'Cleirigh, C., 72
 O'Connell, E., 443
 O'Connor, D., 246
 O'Connor, D. B., 116
 O'Connor, D. W., 282
 O'Connor, J. C., 149, 160
 O'Connor, R. J., 317, 321, 410, 416
 O'Donnell, M. J., 238
 O'Donovan, G., 407
 O'Hanlan, K. A., 435
 O'Hara, B., 423
 O'Hare, P., 364
 O'Hea, E. L., 59
 O'Leary, C. M., 343
 O'Leary, K., 344
 O'Loughlin, J., 234, 235, 236, 315
 O'Malley, K. P., 25

O'Malley, P. M., 312, 314
 O'Malley, S., 354
 O'Neal, K. K., 324
 O'Rorke, J., 166, 174, 176
 Oaten, M. J., 137
 Obama, M., 325
 Obot, I., 351
 Obrocki, J., 358
 Ocke, M. C., 321
 Ockene, I., 288
 Odu, O. O., 297
 Oei, T. P., 352
 Oettingen, G., 350
 Ogden, C. L., 375, 382, 409
 Ogden, J., 81, 84
 Ogedegbe, G., 58, 66, 72
 Ogeil, R. P., 351
 Ogilvie, R. P., 377
 Oguma, Y., 406, 414
 Oh, D., 125
 Oh, K., 232
 Oh, P. I., 80, 403
 Oh, Y.-M., 148
 Ohmoto, M., 314
 Ohno, Y., 321
 Oja, P., 420
 Okada, G., 168
 Okamoto, Y., 168
 Okoli, C. T. C., 327
 Okorodudu, A. O., 358
 Okuda, M., 147
 Okun, M. L., 138
 Okuyama, T., 301
 Olander, E. K., 422
 Olek, M. J., 320
 Olendzki, B., 288
 Olesen, J., 170
 Olikier, S. J., 283
 Olivardia, R., 390
 Oliveira, N., 410, 416
 Oliver, M. N., 174
 Oliveri, S., 69
 Olmstead, M. C., 351
 Olsen, E. O., 384
 Olsen, J., 54
 Olsen, P., 146
 Olsen, R., 72
 Olsen, S. F., 343
 Olshefsky, A. M., 433
 Olsson, K. L., 328
 Olsson, T., 415
 Oluboyede, Y., 282
 Olver, I. N., 269
 Olver, J. S., 149
 Ondeck, D. M., 165
 Onen, C. L., 237
 Onoda, K., 168
 Onorato, I. M., 298
 Oosenbrug, E., 248
 Operario, D., 8
 Opitz, M., 411
 Oram, C., 210
 Orav, E. J., 57
 Orbell, S., 51, 87
 Orchard, T., 236

Orchowski, L. M., 443
 Orekhov, A. N., 234
 Orford, J., 351
 Orhan, A., 143
 Orlando, M., 297, 338
 Ormel, J., 276, 277
 Ornbol, E., 205, 208
 Ornish, D., 247, 248
 Orpana, H., 379
 Orsini, N., 405, 415
 Ortega, L. L., 327
 Orth-Gomer, K., 239
 Ortner, C. N. M., 351
 Osborn, C. Y., 432
 Osborn, J. W., 244
 Osborn, R. L., 277
 Osborne, M. I., 393
 Osborne, M. T., 240
 Oschmann, P., 213, 214
 Oshima, A., 327
 Oskam, M.-J., 183
 Ossenkoppele, R., 280
 Ostelo, R. W. J. G., 180
 Ostengen, G., 441
 Ostergaard, J. N., 408, 415
 Ostermann, T., 211
 Otani, H., 301
 Ottaviani, C., 206, 392
 Otterbein, S., 413
 Otto, A. D., 402, 414
 Otto, M. W., 363
 Ouimette, P., 124, 125
 Ounpuu, S., 145, 232, 234, 236, 237, 238, 240
 Overbeck, G., 209
 Overvad, K., 379, 380, 408, 415
 Owen, J., 270
 Owen, N., 424
 Owens, D. K., 171
 Oxman, M. N., 213, 214
 Oy, U. H., 213, 214
 Øystein, K., 9
 Ozanne, S. E., 377
 Ozemek, C., 405
 Ozer, E. J., 109, 151
 Ozga, M., 271

P

Paasche-Orlow, M. K., 432
 Pabst, A., 349
 Pace, L., 329
 Pace, T. M., 246
 Pace, T. W. W., 151
 Pacher, P., 357
 Padwal, R. S., 65
 Paffenbarger, R., 404
 Paffenbarger, R. S. Jr., 404, 405, 406, 414
 Pagan, J. A., 56, 57, 203
 Page, A. S., 407
 Page, J. B., 432
 Paget-Bailly, S., 35
 Pagliari, C., 287
 Pagoto, S. L., 53

Pagovich, O., 59
 Pais, P. Varigos, J., 232, 234
 Pais, P., 145, 236, 238
 Pakalniskiene, V., 108
 Pakosh, M., 248
 Pakosh, M. T., 80
 Pala, V., 408, 415
 Palermo, T., 203
 Palermo, T. M., 165, 182, 183
 Palmer, B. F., 380
 Palmer, C. S., 203
 Palmer, J. A., 165
 Palmer, S. C., 271
 Palmisano, G., 287
 Palombaro, K. M., 408, 415
 Palsson, O., 182
 Paluch, A. E., 53
 Pambianco, G., 236
 Pan, T., 207, 211
 Panagioti, M., 291
 Panda, M., 166
 Panda, M., 174, 176
 Pandey, M. R., 236
 Pandit, A. U., 432
 Pang, R., 217
 Panos, G., 73
 Panwar, S., 345
 Papacosta, O., 239
 Papadaki, A., 444
 Papadopoulos, A., 35
 Papas, R. K., 11, 14, 122, 123, 182, 183
 Papies, E. K., 378
 Paradis Tagalakakis, V., 234–236
 Paradis, G., 315
 Parchman, M. L., 277
 Parekh, P., 287
 Parikh, N. D., 342
 Parish, J. T., 58
 Park, A., 340
 Park, A. N., 432
 Park, C., 202
 Park, C. L., 278
 Park, E. R., 182, 183
 Park, H. S., 251
 Park, J., 166, 194
 Parke, H. L., 291
 Parker, C. S., 66, 67
 Parker, M., 281
 Parker, M. M., 57
 Parker, R. M., 276, 432
 Parks, C. G., 141
 Parks, J. W., 404
 Parraga, G., 248
 Parrott, D. J., 344
 Parry, C. D., 343
 Parschau, L., 84
 Parsons, G. A., 239
 Parsons, J. M., 50
 Parsons, L., 357
 Parton, E., 148
 Pasanen, M., 166, 174, 176
 Pasco, J. A., 165
 Pascoe, E. A., 118
 Pascoe, M. C., 383

- Passchier, J., 208, 209
 Passin, W. F., 122, 123, 139
 Passin, W. F., 298
 Patel, D., 326
 Patel, H., 357
 Patel, K., 237
 Patel, K. D., 125
 Patel, R. S., 53
 Patel, S. R., 377, 446
 Patel, V., 72
 Pathak, N., 97
 Paton, S. M., 78
 Patra, J., 343, 345, 346
 Patrick, C. J., 350
 Patrick, M. E., 314, 351
 Patterson, D. R., 209, 210
 Patton, G., 363
 Paty, J. A., 78
 Paul, A., 125
 Paul, C., 76
 Paul, L., 57
 Paulozzi, L., 178
 Pauly, M. V., 56, 57
 Paun, O., 283
 Pautassi, R. M., 348
 Pavare, J., 47, 49
 Pavlik, V. N., 281
 Pavlin, D. J., 181, 183
 Pawaskar, M., 68
 Paxton, R. J., 411, 416
 Paxton, S. J., 383, 375, 387
 Payne, D., 182, 183
 Paynter, J., 316
 Peacock, C., 54
 Pearce, G., 291
 Pearlson, G. D., 351
 Pearson, B. L., 109
 Pearson, M. R., 354
 Peat, G., 380
 Peay, E. R., 49
 Peay, M. Y., 49
 Pechacek, T. F., 35
 Pedersen, A., 406, 414
 Pedersen, A. F., 144
 Pedersen, N. L., 149, 193, 281
 Pedersent, O., 286
 Pederson, L. L., 317
 Peele, S., 349, 364
 Peerdeman, K. J., 165
 Pegram, S. E., 344
 Peila, R., 280
 Pekkarinen, H., 402, 414
 Pekrun, G., 411
 Peleg, K., 357
 Pelissier, J. Y., 174
 Pelletier, K. R., 205
 Pelliccia, A., 418
 Pence, L. B., 164, 182, 183
 Penedo, F., 122, 123
 Penedo, F. J., 72, 120, 270
 Peng, Y. B., 170
 Penley, J. A., 118
 Pennebaker, J. W., 122, 123, 125
 Penner, L. A., 74
 Pennington, K., 176, 329
 Penninx, B. W., 141
 Penrod, J. R., 202
 Pentz, M., 68
 Penza-Clyve, S. M., 71
 Penzien, D. B., 180
 Pepper, J., 322
 Pepper, S., 327
 Perard, M., 217
 Pereira, M. A., 375
 Perella, C., 179
 Perera, R., 325
 Perera, R., 88
 Peres, M. F. P., 179
 Peretti-Watel, P., 262
 Perez, E., 72
 Perez, H. R., 56
 Perez, I., 386
 Perez-Stable, E. J., 97
 Perez-Zepeda, M. F., 53
 Pergadia, M. L., 314
 Perilla, J. L., 151
 Perkins, S. N., 408, 415
 Perkins-Porras, L., 73
 Perko, V. L., 389
 Perla, R. J., 431
 Perle, S. M., 205
 Permutt, M. A., 285
 Perram, S. W., 208
 Perraud, S., 283
 Perrin, J. M., 275
 Perrin, N., 393, 395
 Perrucci, M. G., 201
 Perry, C., 389
 Perry, C. L., 388
 Perry, G. S., 377
 Perry, K., 51
 Perry, N. W., Jr., 16
 Pershagen, G., 258
 Persson, U. M., 200
 Pert, C. B., 161
 Pescatello, L. S., 264
 Peterlin, B. L., 380
 Peters, G.-J. Y., 343
 Peters, J. M., 290
 Peters, M. L., 165, 170, 181, 183, 209
 Petersen, A. V., 315
 Petersen, G. L., 23
 Petersen, K., 358
 Petersen, N. J., 25
 Petersen, R. C., 279
 Petersen, S., 277
 Petersen, S. R., 364
 Peterson, B. S., 24
 Peterson, P. M., 445
 Petersson, M., 117
 Petit, D., 377
 Petitto, J. M., 150
 Petot, G., 281
 Petrelli, J. M., 248
 Petrie, K. J., 51, 145
 Petrilla, A. A., 72
 Petroff, D., 395
 Petronis, V. M., 269
 Petry, N. M., 356
 Petticrew, M., 269
 Pettman, E., 194, 195
 Petukhova, M., 151
 Peveler, R., 270
 Pew Internet, 33
 Peyrot, M., 72
 Pezzin, L. E., 173
 Pfeifer, J. H., 123
 Pfeiffer, R. M., 267
 Pharoah, P., 258
 Phelan, S., 49
 Phelps, P., 401
 Philis-Tsimkas, A., 287
 Phillipa, R. S., 59
 Phillips, D. P., 108
 Phillips, E., 321
 Phillips, F., 193
 Phillips, J. G., 351
 Phillips, K., 122, 123, 139
 Phillips, K. A., 390
 Phillips, K. M., 120
 Phillips, M. M., 29, 30
 Phillips, R. A., 237
 Phillips, R. S., 202, 203, 206, 216
 Phipps, E., 270
 Pho, L., 265
 Phylactou, B. P., 139
 Piarroux, R., 290
 Piazza-Gardner, A. K., 342
 Picavet, H. S. J., 166
 Pickard, R. K. L., 267
 Pickup, J., 148
 Pickup, J. C., 286
 Piedalue, K.-A., 210, 213
 Pierce, C. 71
 Pierce, J., 344
 Pierce, J. P., 315, 316
 Piercy, K. L., 264
 Pietilainen, K. H., 373
 Pietinen, P., 28, 30
 Pietrabissa, G., 383
 Pietrowsky, R., 395
 Piette, J. D., 71, 73
 Pike, J. L., 213, 214
 Pike, K. M., 394
 Pillemer, S., 283
 Pillitteri, J. L., 325
 Pilote, L., 234, 235, 236
 Pimlott-Kubiak, S., 151
 Pina, A. A., 107
 Pineau, N., 378
 Piñeiro, B., 316
 Pinel, J. P. J., 378
 Pingitore, D., 13
 Pinnock, H., 291
 Pinto, A. J., 386
 Piotrowski, C., 175
 Pirisi, L., 267
 Pischon, T., 379, 380
 Pisinger, C., 318, 331
 Pitasi, M. A., 297
 Pitchenik, A. E., 292
 Pitkaniemi, J., 314
 Pitman, R. K., 240
 Pittler, M. H., 207, 211, 213, 214

Pittman, J., 327
 Pitts, A., 121
 Piumatti, G., 343
 Piyavhatkul, N., 205, 208
 Plant, M. A., 340
 Plant, M. L., 340
 Plascencia, N., 170–171
 Plasqui, G., 408, 415
 Plasse, A., 145
 Platz, E. A., 259
 Pleasant, A., 445
 Pleis, J., 53
 Plevinsky, J. M., 291
 Pliatsika, P. A., 73
 Plotnick, L. P., 78
 Plunk, A. D., 345
 Podolski, C.-L., 72, 73
 Pohl, T., 145
 Poirier, P., 236
 Polder, J. J., 440
 Pole, N., 151
 Polich, J. M., 354
 Polivy, J., 378, 386, 387, 388
 Pollack, L., 53
 Pollack, M., 71
 Pollart, S. M., 291
 Polley, B. A., 383
 Pollock, B. G., 343
 Pollock, M. L., 417
 Pomeranz, B. H., 59
 Pomerleau, J., 238, 263
 Pomerleau, O. F., 314
 Ponienman, D., 51
 Pontifex, M. B., 412, 416
 Pool, G. J., 166
 Poole, H., 175
 Poorolajal, J., 344
 Pope, C., 357
 Pope, H., 295
 Pope, H. G. Jr., 358, 390, 392, 393
 Pope, M., 325
 Pope, S. K., 280
 Popescu, D., 108
 Popham, R. E., 337
 Popkin, B., 375
 Popova, S., 343
 Popovic, T., 178
 Popow, C., 287
 Poppe, A. C. M., 386
 Pories, W. J., 286
 Porta, M., 29
 Porte, M., 174
 Portenoy, R. K., 178
 Portillo, C. J., 293
 Portillo, M. M., 147, 241
 Porwal, M., 320
 Poss, J. E., 85
 Possemato, K., 124, 125
 Potischman, N., 262
 Potkin, S. G., 23
 Pott, E., 23
 Pouchot, J., 171
 Pouletty, P., 341, 342

Poulin, M., 107
 Poulin, P. A., 182, 183
 Poulos, C. X., 350
 Poulsen, L. C., 377
 Poulter, M. O., 150
 Poulter, N. R., 228, 234
 Poulton, R., 142, 150, 239
 Pouolin, M. J., 413
 Pouwer, F., 72
 Powell, C., 160
 Powell, J., 53, 320, 417
 Powell, K. E., 53, 264, 422, 423
 Powell, L. H., 246
 Powell, P., 322
 Power, K., 87
 Powers, M. B., 363
 Poznyak, V., 343
 Pozo, C., 116
 Prabhakaran, D., 228, 234
 Prakash, R. S., 412, 416
 Prakash, R., 411, 416
 Pransky, G. S., 116
 Pratala, R., 239
 Pravettoni, G., 69
 Prejean, J., 297
 Presley-Cantrell, L. R., 377
 Presnell, K., 393
 Pressman, S. D., 72, 117
 Presson, C. C., 341
 Prevost, A. T., 139
 Price, D., 166
 Price, D. D., 23, 166, 169, 201
 Price, J. L., 282
 Price, M., 66, 67
 Price-Haywood, E. G., 432
 Prictor, M., 89
 Prieto-Alhambra, D., 380
 Prigerson, H. G., 301
 Primm, B. J., 151
 Prince, M., 280, 283
 Prochaska, J. J., 320
 Prochaska, J. O., 81, 82, 244
 Proctor, R. N., 310
 Prokop, L. J., 384
 Pryor, D. B., 240
 Psaty, B. M., 280
 Pucci, M., 348
 Puhon, M. A., 235, 244, 246
 Pukkala, E., 267
 Puorro, M., 344
 Purcell, D. W., 122, 123, 139, 298
 Pustejovsky, J. E., 278
 Puterman, E., 141
 Puthumana, J., 266

Quadflieg, N., 342
 Quartana, P. J., 270
 Queen, B., 313
 Queffelec, L., 171
 Quetglas, B., 345
 Qui, C., 271
 Quinn, D., 234
 Quinn, J. F., 349
 Quinn, J. R., 47, 49, 50
 Quintana, P. J. E., 322
 Quirk, J., 50
 Quisenberry, A. J., 327
 Quist, M., 408, 416
 Qureshi, A. A., 265
 Qureshi, M. M., 244

R

Raats, M. M., 433
 Rabarison, K. M., 283
 Rabbitts, J., 203
 Rabi, D., 234, 235, 236
 Rabin, B., 144
 Rabin, B. S., 11, 144
 Rabin, C., 51
 Rabinowitz, Y. G., 283
 Rachele, J. N., 424
 Racine, M., 166
 Raczynski, J. M., 29, 30, 246
 Radfar, A., 240
 Radhakrishnan, R., 358
 Radniz, C. L., 209
 Radoi, L., 35
 Radstake, T. R. D. J., 148
 Raffle, P. A. B., 404
 Raffone, A., 201
 Ragan, D. T., 315
 Ragan, J., 124, 125
 Raggi, A., 142
 Raghunathan, T., 240
 Ragland, K., 68
 Rahe, R. H., 108, 113, 428
 Rahimi-Bashar, F., 237
 Rahim-Williams, B., 165, 166
 Rahkonen, O., 239, 377
 Raijmakers, P. G. H. M., 280
 Raine, L. B., 412, 416
 Rains, J. C., 180
 Rainville, P., 161, 176, 201, 206
 Rainwater, D. L., 405
 Rajab, M. W., 422, 423
 Rajan, K. B., 315
 Ralston-Wilson, J., 203
 Rama, S. M., 122, 123, 139, 298
 Rambaut, A., 292
 Ramel, J., 205, 208, 314
 Ramesh, M. N., 138
 Rami, B., 287
 Ramirez, A., 228, 234
 Ramirez, A. G., 316
 Ramos, N., 124, 125
 Ramsay, S., 239
 Ramsey, L. T., 422, 423

Q

Qaseem, A., 171
 Qi, L., 382
 Qin, Y., 89
 Qiu, C., 280

- Ramsey, M. W., 409
 Ramsey, R. R., 291
 Ranasinghe, P. D., 198, 205, 208
 Ranavaya, M., 176
 Ranchor, A. V., 270, 276, 277
 Ranganathan, M., 358
 Rangarajan, S., 233, 234, 238, 239
 Ranke, A. H., 143
 Rao, S. R., 345
 Rao-Melacini, P., 238
 Rapoff, M. A., 176
 Rapoport, A. M., 380
 Rashed, W., 236
 Rasheed, M., 270
 Raskin, S. A., 351
 Rasmussen, H. N., 72, 117
 Ratanawongsa, N., 57, 216
 Ratelle, S., 267
 Raufaste, E., 174
 Raum, E., 418
 Raunika, R. A., 147
 Rausch, D. M., 144
 Rawl, S. M., 47, 49
 Ray, L. A., 354
 Rayburn, W. L., 58
 Rayner, M., 433
 Raynor, H. A., 378, 385
 Rayworth, B. B., 389, 391
 Razak, F., 237
 Rea, T., 240
 Rea, T. D., 280
 Read, J. P., 351
 Reader, D. M., 286
 Reardon, K. W., 147
 Reas, D. L., 329, 395
 Reavley, N., 363
 Redden, J. P., 152
 Redmond, W. J., 161
 Reece, J., 182, 183
 Reed, B. R., 143
 Reed, G. M., 13
 Reed, G. W., 288
 Reed, M., 213, 214
 Reed, M. L., 170
 Reeder, D. M., 109
 Reeves, M. M., 423
 Regalado, F., 432
 Regehr, C., 121
 Regidor, E., 327
 Regoezi, W. C., 109
 Regueira, C., 144
 Rehfeld, R., 217
 Rehkopf, D. H., 434
 Rehm, J., 331, 343, 345, 346
 Rehn, N., 340
 Reiche, E. M. V., 138
 Reid, C. M., 178
 Reid, J., 349
 Reid, M. C., 182, 183
 Reid, R. C., 328
 Reid, T. R., 189
 Reif, J., 31
 Reilly, R. A., 444
 Reilly, T., 298
 Reina, S. S., 329
 Reinhold, T., 207, 211
 Reippainen, J. A., 202
 Reis Batista, R. P., 417
 Reisine, S., 148
 Reissig, C., 317
 Reitzel, L. R., 312
 Reitzel, L. R., 441
 Relton, C., 203
 Remington, G., 23
 Ren, J., 341
 Renard, E., 286
 Rende, R., 315
 Renkewitz, F., 54
 Renner, B., 54
 Reno, R. R., 76
 Rentz, C., 277
 Renz, H., 290
 Resmark, B., 391
 Resnicow, K., 244, 298
 Rethorst, C. D., 410, 416
 Reuben, A., 342
 Reuber, M., 87
 Reutenauer, E. L., 201
 Reuter, M., 413
 Reuter, T., 84
 Revenson, T. A., 147, 241, 277
 Rexrode, K. M., 238, 244, 286, 406, 414
 Rey, G., 343
 Reyes, C., 380
 Reyna, S. P., 236
 Reynam V. F., 54
 Reynolds, K. A., 118, 278
 Reynolds, K. D., 76
 Reynolds, S. L., 431
 Rhee, Y., 178
 Rhew, I. C., 351
 Rhodes, P., 293
 Rhodes, R. E., 79
 Riaz, A., 148
 Ribeiro-Dasilva, M. C., 166
 Ribisl, K., 322
 Riboli, E., 379, 380
 Ricceri, F., 408, 415
 Rice, D. B., 182, 183
 Rich, C. L., 443
 Richards, M., 281
 Richardson, A., 269
 Richardson, K. M., 122, 123
 Richardson, L. C., 255
 Richardson, L., 258
 Richardson, M. A., 70
 Richardson, V. E., 300, 301
 Richert, J., 84
 Richman, J. A., 107, 108
 Richman, L. S., 118
 Rico, C., 432
 Riddoch, C. J., 407
 Rieckmann, N., 246
 Rief, W., 182, 183
 Ries, L. A. G., 260
 Rigaud, D., 378
 Rijken, M., 276, 277
 Riley, J. L. III., 165, 166
 Riley, K. E., 125
 Rilling, J. K., 24
 Rimer, J., 410
 Rimm, E., 320
 Rimm, E. B., 346
 Rinfret, S., 236
 Ringdal, G. I., 271
 Ringen, P. A., 362
 Ringstrom, G., 46, 49, 51, 55
 Rini, C., 322
 Ripatti, S., 314
 Rise, J., 81
 Rissanen, A., 373, 379
 Ritchie, K., 430
 Ritenbaugh, C., 28
 Ritter, A., 364
 Ritterband, L. M., 287
 Riva, S., 69
 Rivers, P., 203
 Rivis, A., 81
 Rixt, H., 409
 Robbins, L. B., 423
 Roberts, B. A., 281
 Roberts, B. W., 72
 Roberts, C. G., 404
 Roberts, D. A., 175
 Roberts, I., 405, 415
 Roberts, J. E., 149
 Roberts, J. W., 72
 Roberts, S., 409
 Roberts, W. O., 417
 Robertson, N., 182
 Robertson, R., 147, 241
 Robertson, S., 320
 Robertson, S. P., 142
 Robine, J.-M., 430
 Robins, L. N., 363
 Robinson, C. S., 355
 Robinson, D. E., 431
 Robinson, D. S., 116
 Robinson, J. G., 117
 Robinson, J. N., 321
 Robinson, J. P., 408
 Robinson, L. R., 173
 Robinson, L., 283
 Robinson, M. E., 166
 Robinson, R. G., 280
 Robinson-Whelen, S., 138, 283
 Roble, O. J., 386
 Robledo-Vega, C., 53
 Robles, D. S., 389
 Robles, G., 47, 49
 Robles, T. F., 139, 150, 283
 Roder, C. H., 209
 Rodin, J., 60, 116, 387
 Rodrigue, J. R., 71
 Rodriguez, A., 432
 Rodriguez, B. L., 280
 Rodriguez, C., 170–171
 Rodriguez, D., 443
 Rodriguez, J., 321
 Rodriguez, L., 271

Rodzón, K. S., 209
 Roe, S., 363
 Roelofs, J., 181, 183, 209
 Roemer, A., 345
 Roerecke, M., 343, 345
 Roerig, J. L., 392
 Roesch, S. C., 118, 270
 Roesen, K., 181, 183
 Roger, V. L., 36, 228
 Rogers, C., 213, 214
 Rogers, C. J., 408, 415
 Rogers, R. D., 344
 Rogers, S. L., 201
 Roglic, G., 288
 Rohan, T., 331
 Rohde, K., 377
 Rohde, P., 316, 389, 393
 Roll, S., 405, 406
 Rolland, C., 382
 Rollins, S. Z., 114
 Rollman, G. B., 165
 Rollnick, S., 354
 Rollnick, S., 66, 89
 Romani, G. L., 201
 Romano, J. M., 164
 Roman-Rodriguez, M., 291
 Rombouts, S., 363
 Romero, A. J., 110
 Romeyke, T., 202
 Romo, L., 390
 Romu, T., 373
 Ronan, D. W., 119
 Ronan, G. F., 119
 Rones, R., 207, 211
 Ronnema, T., 379
 Ronnie, J., 53, 417
 Ronzi, S., 239
 Rook, K. S., 287
 Rooks, J., 201
 Room, R., 343, 345, 348
 Rooney, B., 390
 Rooney, K., 377
 Roos, C. R., 354
 Roos, E., 239
 Roose, S. P., 23, 24
 Roozen, S., 343
 Rorth, M., 408, 416
 Rosal, M. C., 117, 288
 Rosario, M., 108
 Rose, J., 341
 Rose, J. B., 166
 Rose, R. M., 24
 Rose, S., 351, 358
 Roseman, J. M., 241
 Rosen, A. B., 430
 Rosen, C. S., 83
 Rosen, R. I., 351
 Rosenberg, E., 57, 141, 166, 174, 176
 Rosenberg, H., 355
 Rosenberg, M., 421
 Rosenberg, N. L., 357
 Rosenberg, P. S., 267
 Rosenberg, Y., 236

Rosenblatt, D. A. N., 32
 Rosenblatt, K. A., 267
 Rosenblum, N., 271
 Rosengren, A., 145, 234, 238, 239, 240
 Rosengren, K. S., 213, 214
 Rosenkranz, M., 201
 Rosenman, R. H., 224, 240
 Rosenstock, I. M., 76
 Rosenthal, R. J., 384
 Rosenthal, R., 150
 Rosenvinge, J. H., 389
 Rosier, E. M., 174
 Rosland, A., 287
 Rosner, B. A., 257
 Rosner, B., 345
 Rösner, S., 354
 Rosnick, C. B., 280
 Rospenda, K. M., 107, 108
 Ross, K. M., 181, 385
 Ross, M. J., 183
 Ross, R. K., 264
 Rosselli, F., 395
 Rosselli, F. Kraemer, H. C.
 Rossen, R. D., 291
 Rosser, B. A., 441
 Rossi, A., 383
 Rossingnol, M., 202
 Rossmann, C., 54
 Rosso, A. L., 380
 Rossow, I., 344
 Roter, D. L., 58
 Roth, M., 203
 Roth, R. S., 176
 Rothenbacher, D., 418
 Rothman, A. J., 69, 386
 Rothman, A., 441
 Rothman, R. L., 432
 Rothstein, H. R., 122, 123
 Rotskoff, L., 347
 Rotter, J. B., 116
 Rouf, R., 210
 Roullon, F., 390
 Rounds, J., 195
 Rourke, K. M., 107
 Rousseau, M.-C., 258
 Routson, T. R., 53
 Rovio, S., 280
 Rowan, J. S., 166
 Rowland-Seymour, A., 198, 205, 208
 Rozanski, A., 246
 Rozenberg, S., 202
 Rozensky, R. H., 11, 14
 Rozin, P., 378
 Rozsa, S., 391
 Ruan, W. J., 353
 Rubak, S., 354
 Rubenstein, S., 375
 Rubenstein, S. M., 208
 Rubin, E. H., 282
 Rudd, R. R., 432
 Ruder, T., 275
 Rudich, A., 248
 Rudolph, K. L., 142

Rudy, T. E., 175
 Rudzki, M., 258, 259, 262
 Rudzki, S., 258, 259, 262
 Ruehlman, L. S., 181, 183
 Ruitenber, A., 280
 Ruiz, J. M., 239
 Ruiz, T. L., 329
 Rumboldt, Z., 233, 237
 Rumpf, H.-J., 329
 Ruppert, T. M., 408, 415
 Rusby, J. C., 315
 Rushing, O., 432
 Russell, D. W., 85, 86, 150
 Russell, M. A., 444
 Russell-Mayhew, S., 47, 49
 Russo, J. E., 72
 Russo, R., 170
 Rutherford, B. R., 23, 24
 Rutledge, P. C., 340
 Rutledge, T., 240
 Rutqvist, L. E., 320
 Rutten, G., 288
 Rutter, P. D., 60
 Ruzek, J. I., 122
 Ryan, B., 182, 183
 Ryan, C. J., 47, 48
 Ryan, G. W., 216
 Ryan, S., 57, 443
 Rylander, R., 109
 Ryu, H., 201

S

Saab, P. G., 241, 246, 441
 Saakselahti, A., 407, 415
 Saartok, T., 166
 Sabado, M. D., 327
 Sabatini, F., 386
 Sabee, C. M., 53
 Sabia, S., 320
 Sabiston, C. M., 422
 Sacco, R. L., 411, 416
 Sachdev, P., 388
 Sachse, K., 54
 Sackett, D. L., 68
 Sackner-Bernstein, J., 382
 Sadashiv, S. K., 178
 Sadler, B., 314
 Sadowska, A., 283
 Saez, J., 72
 Safran, D. G., 73
 Saffren, S. A., 72
 Sage, R. E., 151
 Saghaei, E. M., 278
 Sagrestano, L. M., 298
 Saha, S., 198, 205, 208
 Sahebkar, A., 237
 Sahlqvist, A.-S., 380
 Sahota, N., 89
 Saint-Jean, G., 432
 Saito, E., 74
 Saito, Y., 434

- Sakasishi, K., 314
 Saladin, M. E., 328
 Salam, R. A., 324
 Salamonsen, A., 202
 Salamoun, M., 340
 Salans, L. B., 372
 Salas-Lopez, D., 56
 Salberg, A., 248
 Sale, E., 363
 Salem, J. K., 287
 Sales, E., 122, 123
 Salgueiro, M. F., 315
 Sallis, J. F., 423, 442
 Salmenniemi, S. T., 202
 Salomon, J. A., 430
 Salonen, J. T., 146
 Salsman, J. M., 278
 Salzinger, S., 108
 Sambrano, S., 363
 Samha, F. F., 66, 67
 Samitz, G., 405, 406, 414
 Samokhvalov, A., 343
 Sampson, A., 326
 Sampson, N. A., 151
 Samuel-Hodge, C., 383, 385
 Samuelson, M., 210, 214
 Sanabria-Ferrand, P.-A., 442
 Sanboek, A., 354
 Sanborn, P. M., 316
 Sanchez del Rio, M., 170
 Sánchez-Johnsen, L. A. P., 317
 Sanchez, M., 442
 Sanchez, M. N., 25
 Sanchez, O. A., 406, 407, 415
 Sanchis-Gomar, F., 418
 Sancier, K. M., 198, 205, 208
 Sanderman, R., 270, 276, 277
 Sanders, S., 283
 Sanders, S. H., 164, 183
 Sandford, J., 89, 419
 Sandler, D. P., 141, 259
 Sandrik, L. L., 71
 Sands, D. Z., 59
 Sanford, A. A., 53
 Sani, F., 87
 Sanna, L. J., 141
 Sansgiry, S. S., 215
 Santa Ana, E. J., 328
 Santaguida, L., 211
 Santana, P., 327
 Sanzone, M., 391
 Sao-Joao, T. M., 87
 Saperstein, S. L., 53
 Sapphire-Bernstein, S., 102
 Sapolsky, R. M., 239, 241
 Saracino, M., 145
 Sarason, I. G., 315
 Sardinha, L. B., 407
 Sargent, J. D., 315
 Sargent-Cox, K., 72
 Sarin, A.-P., 314
 Saris, W. H., 406, 414
 Sarkar, C., 343
 Sarkar, D. K., 348
 Sartor, C. E., 314
 Sarvanan, Y., 138
 Sarvela, P. D., 298
 Sasco, A. J., 322
 Saski, G. H., 384
 Sato, H., 145, 240
 Sattin, R. W., 409
 Saules, K. K., 318
 Saunders, T., 122, 123
 Saunders, W. B., 240
 Savage, E., 288
 Savetsky-German, J., 408, 415
 Sawyer, A. T., 125, 182, 183
 Sawyer, B., 439
 Sawyer, M. G., 320
 Sayardoust, S., 320
 Sayette, M. A., 344
 Saz, P., 345
 Scagliusi, F. B., 386
 Scalf, P. E., 411, 416
 Scarapinchia, T. M. F., 422
 Scarborough, P., 433
 Scarpa, A., 151
 Scarscelli, D., 353
 Scavron, J., 288
 Schaap, M. M., 312, 327
 Schachingen, A., 54
 Schachter, S., 325
 Schachter, S. C., 202, 206
 Schaefer, C., 113, 149
 Schaefer, E. J., 248
 Schaefer, J. A., 276
 Schaffrath-Rosario, A., 35
 Schaller, J., 276
 Schaller, M., 137
 Schare, M. L., 349
 Scharf, M., 217
 Schatzkin, A., 28, 262
 Schauer, G., 311
 Schebendach, J., 417
 Schecter, C. B., 237
 Schedlowski, M., 141
 Scheele, P., 258
 Scheffler, R., 13
 Scheiderman, N., 121
 Scheier, M. F., 72, 116, 117
 Scheldeman, L., 13
 Schell, L. M., 108
 Scheltens, P., 280
 Schemhammer, E. S., 446
 Schenck-Gustafsson, K., 239
 Schendel, D., 54
 Scheniderman, N., 78
 Schenker, S., 383
 Scher, A. I., 380
 Scherder, E. J. A., 280
 Scherrer, S., 122, 123
 Schiffrin, E. L., 236
 Schild, C., 343
 Schild, S., 390
 Schillinger, D., 57
 Schinkothe, D., 283
 Schlaich, M., 228, 234
 Schlatter, M., 271
 Schleicher, N. C., 316
 Schlenger, W. E., 107
 Schlenk, E. A., 74
 Schmaltz, H. N., 239
 Schmaus, A., 35
 Schmid, C. H., 205, 207, 208, 211, 314
 Schmidt, F., 408, 415
 Schmidt, J. E., 143
 Schmidt, K., 150
 Schmidt, L. A., 278, 301
 Schmidt, M. K., 78
 Schmidt, R., 395
 Schmidt, S., 205, 208
 Schmidt, U., 358, 391
 Schmidt-Kassow, M., 413
 Schmitz, K. H., 408, 415
 Schneider, A., 210, 214
 Schneider, C. E., 53
 Schneider, D. J., 236
 Schneider, E. C., 432
 Schneider, M. J., 205
 Schneider, R., 199
 Schneider, R. K., 145
 Schneider, S., 78
 Schneiderman, N., 72, 246, 298
 Schnohr, P., 406, 414
 Schober, E., 287
 Schober, W., 322
 Schoeller, D., 267
 Schoenbaum, E., 298
 Schoenbaum, M., 317
 Schoenen, J., 171, 180
 Schoenthaler, A., 58, 66, 72
 Scholz, U., 78, 84, 327
 Schommer, J., 73
 Schork, N. J., 141
 Schousboe, K., 377
 Schreck, M., 267
 Schreiber, J., 47, 49
 Schreiner, W. S., 316
 Schreurs, K., 276, 277
 Schreurs, K. M. G., 183
 Schroeder, D. R., 36
 Schroeder, K. E. E., 141
 Schroeder, K., 88
 Schroevers, M., 270
 Schrooten, M. G., 181
 Schuckit, M. A., 362
 Schuit, A. J., 406, 414
 Schulenberg, J. E., 312, 314
 Schull, W. J., 376
 Schulman, A., 420
 Schulsinger, F., 376
 Schulz, K. F., 31
 Schulz, R., 236, 270, 278, 300
 Schulz, S., 341
 Schulze, A., 312
 Schulze, M. B., 379, 380
 Schulze, O., 358
 Schuman, P., 298
 Schumann, A., 329
 Schunkert, H., 232, 233
 Schurtz, D. R., 160
 Schuster, D. V., 316

- Schutte, A. E., 228, 234
 Schutte, K. K., 345
 Schuz, B., 79, 84
 Schuz, N., 84
 Schwab, K. O., 408, 415
 Schwalm, D., 13
 Schwalm, J.-D., 244
 Schwartz, B. S., 171
 Schwartz, G. E., 14
 Schwartz, J. E., 234, 239
 Schwartz, J. S., 72
 Schwartz, M. W., 376
 Schwartz, R., 432
 Schwartz, S., 393
 Schwarzer, R., 78, 83, 84
 Schwarzfuchs, D., 248
 Schwarzinger, M., 343
 Schwegler, A. F., 166
 Schwind, K. M., 111
 Sclafani, A., 378
 Scolari, R., 433
 Scott, B., 207, 211
 Scott, C., 363
 Scott, D. J., 23, 24
 Scott, J. A., 444
 Scott, J. C., 320
 Scott, R. A., 380
 Scott, S., 255
 Scott, T., 205, 208, 314
 Scott-Robertson, L., 417
 Scott-Sheldon, L. A., 298
 Scullard, P., 54
 Searle, A., 114, 288
 Sebre, S., 108
 Secher, N. J., 343
 Secura, G. M., 297
 Sedway, J. A., 208
 Seeger, C. M., 215
 Seegers, V., 377
 Seeman, T. E., 102, 234, 239
 Seemann, E. A., 108, 254
 Segall, A., 52
 Segerstrom, S. C., 118, 138, 139, 140, 141, 269
 Segotas, M., 122, 123
 Segrestin, B., 388
 Seiffge-Krenke, I., 119
 Seiler, E. M., 298
 Seime, R. J., 175
 Sel, S., 290
 Selby, J., 321
 Seligman, D. A., 150
 Selik, R., 293
 Selke, S., 145
 Selker, H. P., 248
 Selkoe, D. J., 280
 Seller, R., 57, 141
 Selmes, M., 283
 Seltman, H., 270
 Selye, H., 103
 Seniell, T., 13
 Senjem, M. L., 279
 Sensky, T., 182, 183
 Seo, H. G., 326
 Seoane, L., 432
 Seow, D., 282
 Sepa, A., 147, 287
 Sephton, S. E., 150
 Sepulveda, M.-J., 437
 Serpa, L., 72
 Serretti, A., 201, 205
 Sesso, H. D., 406, 414
 Seth, P., 178
 Seto, T. B., 74
 Severens, J. L., 183
 Severson, H. H., 323
 Sevincer, A. T., 350
 Seyssel, K., 388
 Shafer, P., 326
 Shah, R., 178
 Shai, I., 248
 Shalev, I., 142
 Shanklin, S. L., 313, 384
 Shannon, S., 205, 216
 Shao, Y., 172
 Shapiro, A. P., 147
 Shaprio, B. L., 350
 Shapiro, D., 206, 392
 Shapiro, J. R., 208
 Shapiro-Mendoza, C. K., 321
 Sharangparni, J., 210
 Sharma, A. M., 237
 Sharma, M., 423
 Sharma, R., 198, 205, 208
 Sharma, S. M., 298
 Sharp, J., 248
 Sharp, L. K., 123, 125
 Sharp, S. J., 380
 Sharpe, L., 182, 183
 Shatterji, S., 72
 Shaver, J., 47, 49
 Shavlik, D. J., 441
 Shaw, H., 316, 393
 Shea, M. K., 386
 Shea, P., 327
 Sheehy, R., 122, 123
 Sheeran, P., 81, 83, 85, 87
 Sheese, B. E., 124, 125
 Sheffer, C. E., 327
 Sheffield, J., 113
 Shehan, D., 295, 297
 Shehata, O. E. K. A., 210, 213
 Sheikh, A., 291
 Shekelle, P., 171
 Shelton, J. N., 74
 Shelton, R. C., 23
 Shemilt, I., 80, 89
 Shen, B.-J., 240
 Shen, W.-H., 137
 Shen, X., 151, 207, 215
 Shepherd, J., 335, 347
 Sheps, D. S., 145
 Sher, K. J., 340, 349, 350
 Sher, L., 242
 Shere-Wolfe, K. D., 216, 217
 Sheridan, J. F., 201
 Sherman, A. C., 278
 Sherman, D. K., 88, 118
 Sherman, K., 210
 Sherman, K. J., 206, 207, 211
 Sherman, R.L., 255
 Sherman, S. J., 341
 Shernoff, M., 295
 Sherry, D. D., 278, 279
 Sherwood, A., 206, 411, 415
 Sherwood, L., 161
 Sherwood, N. E., 384, 386
 Shi, L., 68
 Shi, S., 179
 Shi, Y., 210
 Shield, K. D., 343
 Shields, E., 423
 Shiffman, S. S., 145
 Shiffman, S., 325, 327
 Shiffman, S., 78
 Shifren, K., 116
 Shih, J. H., 118
 Shihab, H. S., 198, 205, 208
 Shike, M., 28
 Shimabukuro, J., 280
 Shimbo, D., 246
 Shimizu, M., 116
 Shimomura, E. T., 358
 Shin, B.-C., 207, 211
 Shinjo, T., 301
 Shinnick, P., 198
 Shiv, B., 23
 Shlay, J., 267
 Shmalberg, J. W., 209
 Shmueli, A., 202
 Shobha, A., 138
 Shoenberg, J. B., 259
 Shores, E. A., 175
 Shrira, I., 108
 Shriver, T., 267
 Shuai, Y., 288
 Shue, V. M., 280
 Shuval, J., 202
 Siahpush, M., 327
 Sibbritt, D., 202, 203, 205
 Sibinga, E. M., 198, 205, 208
 Sibug-Saber, M., 267
 Sichere, P., 171
 Sidney, S., 239, 241
 Sidorchuk, A., 285
 Siegel, M., 322, 324
 Siegel, R., 253, 254
 Siegel, R. L., 257
 Siegel, S., 61, 122, 123
 Siegle, G. J., 117
 Siegler, B., 284
 Siegler, I. C., 239, 240, 441
 Siegman, A., 242
 Siegrist, M., 54
 Siemiatycki, J., 258
 Siemieniuk, R. A., 382, 385
 Sifakis, F., 295
 Sigmon, S. T., 119
 Sigurdson, A. J., 260
 Silberstein, S. D., 143
 Sillero, M., 72

- Silva, M. A. V. D., 87
 Silva, S. A., 315
 Silveira, H., 410, 416
 Silver, M. A., 403
 Silver, R. C., 107, 118
 Silverman, K., 80
 Sim, J., 179
 Simard, J., 78
 Simmons, A. N., 388
 Simmons, J. B., 89
 Simmons, V. N., 316
 Simon, D., 171
 Simon, G., 240
 Simon, M. A., 182, 183
 Simonato, L., 35
 Simoni, J. M., 78
 Simon-Morton, B., 327
 Simons, M., 423
 Simonsick, E. M., 239, 380
 Simons-Morton, B., 78
 Simpson, S. H., 65
 Simren, M., 46, 49, 51, 55
 Sims, E. A. H., 372
 Sin, N. L., 72
 Sinco, B., 287
 Singer, B. H., 234, 239
 Singer, J. P., 25
 Singh, S., 198, 205,
 208, 384
 Singh-Manoux, A., 320
 Singletary, K. W., 264
 Sinha, R., 72, 328
 Sinniah, D., 321
 Siscovick, D. S., 238
 Siscovick, D., 240
 Sistla, S. C., 178
 Sithole, F., 423
 Sitthi-amorn, C., 145, 240
 Siu, C. O., 23
 Siu, W. O., 358
 Sivenius, J., 146
 Sjostrom, M., 420, 423
 Skeer, M., 322
 Skidmore, B., 182, 183, 211
 Skinner, B. F., 80
 Skinner, T. C., 287, 288
 Skinner, W., 325
 Skipper, B., 73
 Skirboll, L. R., 161
 Skoluda, N., 113
 Skoner, D. P., 11, 47, 144
 Skrulis, M. C., 368, 373,
 376, 386
 Slattery, M. L., 375
 Slaughter, R., 293
 Slaughter, V., 375, 387
 Slavich, G. M., 139
 Sleasman, J. W., 71
 Sledge, I., 286
 Sleicher, D., 198, 205,
 208
 Sliwa, K., 145, 239, 240
 Sliwinski, M., 280
 Sloan, C. D., 253
 Slomkowski, C., 315
 Slugg, R. M., 158
 Sluik, D., 408, 415
 Smack, A. J., 147
 Small, B. J., 278, 280
 Small, R., 182, 183
 Smedslund, G., 271
 Smeele, I. J., 440
 Smeenk, F. W. J. M., 440
 Smeets, R. J., 183
 Smetana, G. W., 142, 170, 171
 Smile, S. R., 178
 Smiles, R. V., 432
 Smith, A. P., 11, 144
 Smith, B. J., 265, 420
 Smith, B. J., 324
 Smith, C., 213, 214
 Smith, C. A., 165, 206,
 208, 412
 Smith, C. F., 49
 Smith, D. A., 237
 Smith, D. G., 173
 Smith, D. P., 8
 Smith, D., 432
 Smith, E. E., 24
 Smith, E. M., 137
 Smith, H. E., 215
 Smith, J., 375
 Smith, L. J., 321
 Smith, M., 282
 Smith, M. S., 278, 279
 Smith, P., 148, 385
 Smith, P. H., 327
 Smith, P. J., 206, 411, 415
 Smith, R., 322
 Smith, R. G., 269
 Smith, R. T., 164
 Smith, S. J., 172, 176
 Smith, T. B., 33, 114
 Smith, T. W., 142, 239
 Smith-Masse, L. C., 248
 Smith-Warner, S. A., 248
 Smolen, A., 150
 Smoliga, J., 417
 Smolinski, M. S., 53
 Smyser, M. S., 432
 Smyth, D., 443
 Smyth, J. M., 124, 125
 Smyth, J., 391
 Smyth, K. A., 281
 Snaedal, J., 282
 Snetselaar, L. G., 28, 285
 Sniehotta, F. F., 84
 Snow, J. C., 68
 Snow, V., 171
 Snyder, C. R., 119
 Snyder, P., 270
 Snyder, S. H., 161
 Sobel, B. E., 236
 Sobel, D. O., 78
 Sobell, L. C., 354
 Sobell, M. B., 354
 Soellner, R., 283
 Soendergaard, J., 47, 48
 Soet, J., 298
 Soffer, D., 357
 Sofuoglu, M., 328
 Soininen, H., 280
 Sokol, R. J., 343
 Sola-Vera, J., 72
 Soler, R. E., 422
 Sollers, J. J., 242
 Sollers, J. J., III, 146
 Solmi, M., 210
 Sololik, A., 24
 Solomon, L. J., 316, 327
 Solorio, R., 432
 Soloway, M., 270
 Sonderegger, L., 122, 123
 Song, F., 326
 Song, G., 239
 Song, J., 384
 Song, M.-Y., 216
 Song, X., 271
 Song, Z., 108
 Sonnentag, S., 111
 Sont, W. N., 259
 Sood, A. K., 263
 Soole, D. W., 363
 Sorensen, T., 329
 Sorensen, T. I., 286, 377
 Sorensen, T. I. A., 376
 Sorkin, J. D., 35
 Sorlie, P. D., 236
 Soroui, J. S., 432
 Sorum, P., 174
 Sotoodehnia, N., 240
 Soto-Vega, E., 53
 Southern, D., 239
 Southwell, B. G., 315
 Soyka, M., 354
 Spaan, P., 298
 Spagrud, L. J., 176
 Sparling, P. B., 79
 Specia, M., 125
 Speck, O., 357
 Speck, R. M., 408, 415
 Speicher, C. E., 138
 Speizer, F. E., 238, 446
 Spence, J. D., 248
 Spencer, E., 379, 380
 Spencer, M., 287
 Spencer, S. J., 234
 Sper, S., 145
 Spicer, P., 74, 74
 Spiegel, D., 150, 271
 Spierings, E. L. H., 143
 Spijkerman, A. M. W., 408, 415
 Spindle, T. R., 444
 Spinhoven, P., 298
 Spira, T. J., 292
 Spiro, A., 240
 Spitzer, B. L., 375
 Spreeuwenberg, P., 109
 Spring, B., 140, 141
 Springer, D., 378
 Springer, J. F., 363
 Spritzler, F., 383

- Sprugevica, I., 108
 Spruijt-Metz, D., 68, 385
 Squier, C., 320
 Squillace, M., 120
 Sri Vengadesh, G., 178
 Sridhar, S., 179
 Srisurapanont, M., 354
 St. Peter, W. L., 73
 St. Pierre, Y., 202
 Stacey, P. S., 342
 Staehelin Jensen, T., 173
 Staessen, J. A., 228
 Staff, J., 344
 Stamatakis, E., 407
 Stambul, H. B., 354
 Stamler, J., 237, 243
 Stamler, R., 243
 Stampfer, M., 345
 Stampfer, M. J., 232, 238, 248, 257, 286, 406, 414, 446
 Standridge, J. B., 342
 Stanford, J. L., 267
 Stanley, F., 343
 Stanner, S. A., 238
 Stanojevic, S., 289
 Stansfeld, S. A., 150
 Stanton, A. L., 119, 124, 125, 277
 Starkstein, S. E., 280
 Stason, W., 345
 Stathopoulou, G., 363
 Staton, L. J., 166, 174, 176
 Stayner, L., 322
 Stead, L. F., 326
 Steardo, L., 391, 393
 Steck, D. J., 259
 Stecker, R., 108
 Steele, C., 234
 Steele, C. M., 350
 Steenland, K., 322
 Stefanek, M., 271
 Stefanick, M. L., 403, 414
 Steffen, J. J., 416, 417
 Steffen, K. J., 391, 392
 Steffens, D. C., 441
 Stegger, J., 379, 380
 Steifel, M. C., 431
 Stein, M. B., 141
 Stein, M. P., 405
 Stein, P. K., 236
 Stein, Z. A., 293
 Steinbeck, G., 145
 Steinbrook, R., 296
 Steiner, M., 357
 Steinhausen, H.-C., 119, 392
 Stelfox, H. T., 57
 Stensel, D., 407
 Stepanski, E., 441
 Stephens, M. A. P., 287
 Stephenson, R., 47, 49
 Steptoe, A., 48, 72, 73, 142, 145, 241, 411, 416, 442
 Stergiou, G. S., 228, 234
 Sterk, C. E., 296
 Stern, B. J., 35
 Sternberg, E. M., 148
 Stetter, F., 120
 Stevens, L. C., 411, 416
 Stevens, S., 325
 Stevens, V. J., 383, 385
 Stevenson, R. J., 137
 Stewart, A., 390
 Stewart, D. E., 150
 Stewart, J. C., 146
 Stewart, K. L., 209
 Stewart, L. K., 408
 Stewart, S. T., 430
 Stewart, W. F., 170, 171
 Stewart-Williams, S., 24
 Steyn, K., 234
 Stice, E., 316, 317, 329, 389, 393
 Stickney, S. R., 317
 Stiller, B., 233
 Stillman, T. F., 160
 Stinson, F. S., 353
 Stites, S., 270
 Stockings, E., 363
 Stockwell, T., 340, 345
 Stoff, D. M., 144
 Stohler, C. S., 23, 24
 Stojanovich, L., 148
 Stojek, M., 391
 Stoll, C. R., 384
 Stolwijk, J. A., 259
 Stone, A. A., 48, 124, 125, 143
 Stone, A. L., 165
 Stone, E. J., 422, 423
 Stone, G. C., 11
 Stone, K. L., 320
 Stoney, C. M., 147
 Storandt, M., 282
 Storr, C. L., 141
 Story, D. F., 195, 202
 Story, M., 388, 389
 Story, M. T., 384
 Stotts, A. L., 322
 Stout, R. L., 353, 363
 Stover, K., 171
 Stovring, H., 47, 48
 Stowell, J. R., 138
 Strachan, E., 145
 Straif, K., 258
 Straif, K., 322
 Strang, J., 363
 Strasser, A. A., 316
 Strauman, T. A., 206, 411, 415
 Straus, M. A., 444
 Straus, R., 240
 Straus, S. E., 204
 Strauss, C., 125
 Strazdins, L., 115
 Streitberger, K., 210, 214
 Streltzer, J., 165
 Streng, A., 204
 Streppel, M. T., 321
 Strid, H., 46, 49, 51, 55
 Striegel, R. H., 393
 Striegel-Moore, R. H., 393, 394, 395
 Strike, P. C., 73
 Strine, T. W., 290
 Stroebe, W., 378
 Strong, C. A., 162
 Strong, D. R., 322
 Strong, W. G., 147
 Stroud, C. B., 149
 Stryk, M., 54
 Stuart, J., 351
 Stuart, R., 436, 441
 Stubbs, B., 210
 Stucker, I., 35
 Studts, J. L., 172
 Stuhr, J., 246
 Stults-Kolehmainen, M. A., 72
 Stummer, H., 202
 Stumvoll, M., 248
 Stunkard, A. J., 376, 393, 394
 Sturmer, T., 267
 Stussman, B. J., 187, 189–191, 193, 194, 196, 202, 203, 215
 Stuart, R., 383
 Su, D., 203
 Su, X., 380
 Suarez, E. C., 241
 Subnis, U., 210, 213
 Subramanian, S. V., 239, 434
 Suen, R. S., 117
 Sufka, K. J., 169
 Sugden, K., 142, 150
 Sugiyama, T., 424
 Suhr, C. J., 267
 Sullivan, K. A., 342
 Sullivan, L. M., 240
 Sullivan, M. J. L., 181, 183
 Sullivan, P. F., 150
 Sullivan-Halley, J., 264
 Sullivan-Mort, G., 383
 Suls, J., 55, 151, 240, 241, 242, 441
 Sun, S., 108, 151
 Sun, T., 47, 206
 Sun, Y., 285
 Sunday, S. R., 382
 Sundberg, T., 202, 203
 Sundblad, G. M. B., 166
 Sundgot-Borgen, J., 389
 Sundram, S., 344
 Sunram-Lea, S. I., 280
 Suo, T., 32
 Suomi, S. J., 109
 Superko, H. R., 403, 414
 Supple, J., 117
 Surwit, R. S., 287
 Susser, I., 293
 Susser, M., 35
 Sutcliffe, S., 259
 Sutton, A. J., 288
 Sutton, J., 72
 Sutton, S., 81, 326
 Sutton-Tyrrell, K., 145
 Suurmeijer, T. P. B. M., 276, 277
 Svane, B., 239
 Svansdottir, H. B., 282

Svendsen, R. P., 47, 48
 Svensson, C., 72
 Svetkey, L. P., 383, 385
 Swanson, K. S., 178
 Sweegers, M. G., 277
 Sweeney, C. T., 317
 Sweep, F. C. G. J., 148
 Swithers, S. E., 378
 Switzer, G. E., 47, 49
 Syed-Mohammed, H., 345
 Syme, S. L., 32, 114
 Symons Downs, D., 416
 Sypeck, M. F., 375
 Syrjala, K. L., 172
 Szabo, A., 416
 Szapary, P. O., 406, 415
 Szatmari, P., 391
 Szekely, C. A., 280
 Szomstein, S., 384

T

Tabibnia, G., 123
 Tacker, D. H., 358
 Tackett, J. L., 147
 Tada, Y., 138, 283
 Taeymans, J., 385
 Tafari, I., 432
 Tagalakakis, V., 235, 236
 Tahilani, K., 390, 391
 Tai, G., 182, 183
 Taitel, M. S., 178
 Takagi, K., 119
 Takahashi, Y., 72
 Takamatsu, S., 340
 Takenaka, K., 149
 Takeuchi, Y., 170–171
 Takkouche, B., 144
 Talala, K., 239
 Talamini, R., 264
 Talbert, E., 408
 Talbot, M., 25
 Tam, S. F., 248
 Tammi, A., 407, 415
 Tamres, L. K., 119
 Tan, J. O. A., 390
 Tan, T., 139
 Tandler, J. M., 23
 Tandon, A., 72, 430
 Tang, A., 178
 Tang, B., 380
 Tang, B. M. P., 213, 214
 Tang, J. L., 89
 Tang, L. H., 248
 Tang, S. S. K., 72
 Tangrea, J. A., 28, 30
 Tanigawa, T., 147
 Tanis, J., 435
 Tanofsky-Kraff, M., 393
 Tanomsup, S., 237
 Tanuri, F. C., 179
 Tanzi, R. E., 280
 Tapper, E. B., 342
 Tarbell, S., 16
 Tardon, A., 407, 415
 Taris, T., 111
 Tarneud, C., 35
 Tartaro, A., 201
 Tashman, L. S., 113
 Tastekin, N., 172
 Tatara, N., 441
 Tate, D. F., 385
 Taulii, M. M., 432
 Taub, P. R., 248
 Taubman, S., 56
 Tawakol, A., 240
 Tax, A., 150
 Taylor, A., 138, 150, 411, 416
 Taylor, A. E., 269
 Taylor, B., 338, 343, 345, 346
 Taylor, C. A., 283
 Taylor, C. B., 240, 393
 Taylor, E., 213, 214, 384
 Taylor, G. H., 248
 Taylor, H. L., 370, 388
 Taylor, K. L., 393
 Taylor, L. K., 107
 Taylor, N. J., 80
 Taylor, R. J., 119
 Taylor, R. S., 248
 Taylor, S. E., 102, 109, 116,
 118, 298
 Taylor, S. J., 291
 Taylor-Piliae, R. E., 199, 205,
 213, 214
 Tchernis, R., 329
 Teasdale, T. W., 376
 Tedeschi, R. G., 302
 Temple, J. L., 378
 Ten Have, T. R., 150
 Tenenbaum, G., 113, 411, 416
 Tenent, B., 264
 Tennen, H., 116, 148, 269, 277,
 350, 351
 Teo, I., 277
 Teo, K., 240, 244
 Teo, K. K., 236
 Tepper, V. J., 71
 Teramukai, S., 213, 214
 Terhune, D. B., 210
 Terry, A., 416
 Terry, R. B., 403, 414
 Testa, M., 344
 Teucher, B., 408, 415
 Thabane, L., 385
 Thacker, B. J., 253
 Thacker, E. L., 253
 Thalau, F., 405, 406
 Thalji, L., 107
 Thaw, J. M., 390, 406
 Thayer, J. F., 242
 Theborge, R. W., 143
 Theberge, N., 194
 Theis, K. A., 171
 Theobald, H., 343
 Theodoratou, E., 263, 264
 Theodore, B. R., 166
 Theorell, T., 239
 Thiede, H., 295, 297
 Thiel, C., 413
 Thielke, S., 436
 Thielke, S., 441
 Thiery, J., 248
 Thijssen, D. H. T., 383, 384
 Thom, D., 57, 59
 Thomas, C. C., 255
 Thomas, J., 120
 Thomas, J. J., 392
 Thomas, K. J., 203
 Thomas, M., 123, 125
 Thomas, S. A., 117
 Thomas, W., 71
 Thomasius, R., 358
 Thomley, B. S., 217
 Thompaon, T., 288
 Thompson, A., 436, 441
 Thompson, L. W., 283
 Thompson, O. M., 248
 Thompson, P. A., 32
 Thompson, P. D., 418
 Thompson, R., 288
 Thompson, S. H., 389
 Thompson, T., 210
 Thompson-Brenner, H.,
 390, 391
 Thorlund, K., 382, 385
 Thorn, B. E., 164, 181,
 182, 183
 Thorne, D., 56
 Thornton, J., 313, 384
 Thornton, L. M., 271, 415
 Thorsen, P., 54
 Thun, M. J., 260, 319, 321
 Thune, I., 264, 4115
 Thurston, B. M., 139
 Tian, H., 239
 Tian, L., 217
 Tian, T., 345
 Tice, D. M., 152, 160
 Tiebout, J., 122, 125
 Tielemans, M. J., 406
 Tietze, A., 113
 Tilburt, J. C., 25, 216, 217
 Timberlake, N., 182, 183
 Timko, A. C., 389, 390
 Timmerman, K. L., 408
 Timofeeva, M., 263, 264
 Tindle, H. A., 117
 Tionneland, A., 379, 380
 Tirosch, A., 248
 Tischkowitz, M., 258
 Tjonneland, A., 408, 415
 Tleyjeh, I. M., 263
 To, T., 289
 Tobar, D. A., 414
 Tobin, J., 78
 Todaro, J. F., 240
 Todd, J. E., 433
 Todd, M., 350
 Toivonen, K., 210, 213
 Tokakef, S., 384

Tolfrey, K., 407, 415
 Tollefson, D., 354
 Tolsdorf, E., 210, 213
 Tom, S. M., 123
 Tomaka, J., 118
 Tomar, S. L., 262
 Tomaszewski, M., 228, 234
 Tomfohr, L. M., 240
 Tomich, P. L., 118, 278
 Tominaga, K., 147
 Tomita, T., 149
 Tomporowski, P. D., 413, 416
 Toneatto, T., 353
 Tong, F., 277
 Tong, V. T., 321
 Tong, Z.-Y., 267
 Tonigan, J. S., 353, 355
 Torchalla, I., 327
 Torian, L., 293
 Torian, L. V., 295, 297
 Torpy, J. M., 238
 Torres, A., 108, 254
 Torstveit, M. K., 389
 Tortorella, A., 391, 393
 Toubro, S., 286
 Touchette, E., 377
 Tousignant-Laflamme, Y., 166, 176
 Tovian, S. M., 436, 441
 Townend, D., 343
 Towner, E., 320
 Townsend, A., 114
 Tracey, I., 161
 Tracy, R. P., 236
 Traeger, L., 270
 Trafton, J. A., 178
 Trask, O. J., 138
 Travis, T., 344
 Trawalter, S., 174
 Treasure, J., 390, 392
 Treede, R.-D., 160
 Treiber, F. A., 147
 Tremblay, J., 234, 235, 236
 Trembley, R. E., 377
 Tremont, G., 283
 Treur, T., 391
 Trevino, K., 278
 Treyner, W., 149
 Trichopoulos, D., 379, 380
 Trichopoulou, A., 379, 380
 Trinh, K., 207
 Tripodo, E., 179
 Trivedi, M. H., 410, 416
 Trock, B., 30
 Trockel, M., 240
 Troiano, R. P., 264
 Trost, A., 393
 Truelsen, T., 406, 414
 Trulsen, T., 238
 Truman, B. I., 431, 432
 Trupp, R., 72
 Tsai, A. G., 385
 Tsai, J., 445

Tsai, P.-S., 210, 213
 Tsang, H. W., 205, 208
 Tsang, H. W. H., 205
 Tsao, J. C. I., 207, 211
 Tsertsvadze, A., 211
 Tsigos, C., 147
 Tsiotra, P. C., 147
 Tsoi, D. T., 320
 Tsouros, S., 211
 Tsugane, S., 147
 Tsui, P. W., 182, 183
 Tsukayama, H., 215
 Tsunaka, M., 205, 208
 Tsuyuki, R. T., 65
 Tuchman, S., 213, 214
 Tucker, J. A., 29, 30, 355
 Tucker, J. S., 338
 Tucker, O. N., 384
 Tucker, R. D., 146
 Tumino, R., 408, 415
 Tuna, H., 172
 Tuomilehto, J., 239, 402, 414
 Tuomilehto, J., 280
 Turchina, T., 108
 Turk, D. C., 161, 163, 165, 168, 170, 174, 175, 178, 180, 181
 Turner, D. C., 117
 Turner, H. M., 390
 Turner, J., 277
 Turner, J. A., 23, 206, 211
 Turner, K., 71, 72
 Turner, M. B., 228
 Turner, R., 53, 144
 Turner, R. B., 11, 142
 Turpin, G., 96, 113
 Turpin, R. S., 89
 Turrell, G., 424
 Tuschen-Caffier, B., 395
 Twicken, D., 198
 Twisk, J., 72
 Twyman, L., 76
 Tyndall, J., 89, 419
 Tyrrell, D. A. J., 11, 144

U

Ubel, P. A., 276
 Ucea, F., 72
 Uchino, B. N., 142
 Udaltsova, A., 345
 Udaltsova, N., 345
 Ueshima, H., 237
 Ukert, B., 329
 Ukoumunne, O. C., 47, 48
 Ulian, M. D., 386
 Ullman, D., 216
 Ulrich, C., 109
 Umstattd, M. R., 351
 Unger, E. R., 267
 Unger, J. B., 316
 Unger, T., 228, 234

Unger-Saldana, K., 47, 49
 Unrod, M., 316
 Unsain, R. F., 386
 Upchurch, D. M., 203, 215, 435
 Updegraff, J. A., 53, 72, 79, 88, 102, 107, 118, 298
 Urbane, U. N., 47, 49
 Urizar, G. G., 122, 123
 Usai, S., 142
 Usdan, S. L., 351
 Ustun, B., 72, 430
 Uusitalo, U., 280
 Uvnas-Moberg, K., 117
 Uy, M. A., 108
 Uzunca, K., 172

V

Vaarala, O., 147, 287
 Vadiraj, H. S., 138
 Vadeloo, M., 378
 Vahedian-azimi, A., 237
 Vainionpaa, A., 408, 415
 Valdiserri, R. O., 298
 Valente, T. W., 433
 Valentin, V., 236
 Valesini, G., 179
 Valimaki, I., 407, 415
 Valkonen, T., 434
 Vall, E., 393
 Vallejo, R., 178
 Valleroy, L. A., 295, 297
 Valliere, W. A., 327
 Valtorta, N. K., 239
 van Agt, H. M. E., 312
 van Baal, P. H. M., 440
 Van Berckel, B. N. M., 280
 van Bockxmeer, F. M., 412, 416
 Van Buyten, J.-P., 179
 van Cauter, E., 377
 Van Cauwenberg, J., 424
 Van Cleave, J., 275
 van Dam, R. M., 383, 402, 408, 414, 415
 van de Ven, V. G., 209
 van den Berg, P. A., 384
 Van der Does, A. J., 210
 van der Flier, W. M., 280
 van der Goes, D. N., 177–178
 van der Graaf, K., 351
 van der Molen, T., 291
 van der Schouw, Y. T., 379, 380
 van der Windt, D., 166, 170
 van Dijk, J. M., 406
 van Dillen, S. M. E., 109
 van Dongen, E. V., 413
 van Duijn, C. M., 280
 van Dulmen, M., 125
 Van Dyck, R., 210
 van Eijk, J. T., 409

- van Elderen, T., 248
 Van Ells, J., 378
 van Furth, E. F., 394
 van Hanswijck de Jonge, P., 394
 Van Horn, L., 375
 van Jaarsveld, C. H. M., 315
 van Kleef, M., 179
 Van Laarhoven, A. I., 165
 van Lindert, H., 9
 van Luenen, S., 298
 van Middelkoop, M., 208
 van Oppen, P., 141
 van Overmeeren, E. J., 423
 Van Oyen, H., 430
 van Reekum, R., 282
 van Riel, P. L. C. M., 148
 van Rossum, E., 409
 Van Royen, P., 69
 van Ryn, M., 49, 74
 van Schayck, C. P., 440
 van Strien, T., 386
 van Swieten, J. C., 280
 Van Tilburg, M. A. L., 287
 van Tulder, M., 207, 211
 van Tulder, M. W., 180, 208
 Van Weert, J. C. M., 282
 Van Winkle, L. C., 175
 Van Wymelbeke, V., 378
 van Zundert, J., 179
 Vanbeek, M. J., 265
 Vandeberg, J. L., 405
 Vander Hoorn, S., 261
 Vanderburg, D., 23
 Vandermoot, R., 147
 Vangel, M., 201, 207
 VanPatter, M., 412, 416
 Varady, K. A., 407
 Varallo, G., 383
 Vardavas, C., 322
 Varela, J. E., 384
 Vargas, A. J., 32
 Vargas, S., 122, 123, 139
 Varigos, J., 145, 236
 Variyam, J. N., 433
 Varnado-Sullivan, P. J., 390, 406
 Varney, 65
 Varstala, V., 407, 415
 Vartanian, L. R., 378
 Vartiainen, E., 231, 239
 Vasconez, H. C., 384
 Vase, L., 23
 Vaskinn, A., 362
 Vaughan, C., 320
 Vaux-Bjerke, A., 264
 Vazile-Tamsen, C., 344
 Vazquez, N., 72
 Veazie, P. J., 47
 Vecchi, S., 354
 Vedhara, K., 137, 288, 290, 298
 Veehof, M. M., 183
 Veeranna, H. B., 138
 Vega, E., 171
 Vega-Perez, E., 171
 Veldtman, G. R., 50
 Velicer, W. F., 82
 Veliz, P. T., 435
 Velligan, D. I., 68
 Veloso, G. G., 406
 Vemuri, P., 279
 Venegas, A., 354
 Venegas, L. M., 232
 Venn, A., 323
 Venzke, J. W., 165
 Veraldi, A., 258
 Verdes, E., 72
 Verdonck de Leeuw, I. M., 277
 Verghese, J., 280
 Verhagen, A. P., 208, 209
 Verheggen, R. J. H. M., 383, 384
 Verhey, F. R. J., 283
 Verhoeven, J. E., 141
 Verkaik, R., 282
 Verkuilen, J., 213, 214
 Vermeire, E., 69
 Veronese, N., 210
 Verplanken, B., 87
 Verschuren, W. M., 406, 414
 Vertosick, E. A., 207
 Vessoni, A., 386
 Vestergaard, M., 54
 Veugelers, P., 423
 Vickers, A., 207, 211
 Vickers, A. J., 207
 Vickers, T. J., 53
 Vickers, Z., 152
 Victor, T. W., 170
 Vidrine, J. I., 312
 Vieira, A. R., 32
 Vieira, R., 32
 Viikari, J., 407, 415
 Viitanen, M., 280
 Vikram, Y. K., 138
 Villalba, D., 351
 Vilne, B., 233
 Vincent, H. K., 210, 214, 215
 Vine, S. J., 105
 Vineis, P., 258
 Viner, R. M., 338
 Virna, S., 290
 Virtamo, J., 28, 30
 Virtanen, M., 28, 30
 Visioni, A. J., 244
 Visscher, P. M., 377
 Visser, M., 378
 Vissers, D., 385
 Vitaro, F., 377
 Vitória, P. D., 315
 Vivolo-Kantor, A. M., 178
 Vlaeyen, J. W., 181, 183
 Vlaeyen, J. W. S., 165, 171, 180–183, 209
 Vlahov, D., 298
 Vocks, S., 395
 Vogel, M. E., 441
 Vogel, R. I., 266
 Vogt, F., 80, 89
 Volbekiene, V., 423
 Volcik, K. A., 345
 Volker, C., 145
 Volkow, N. D., 348, 356
 Vollebergh, W. A. M., 315
 Vollmer, W. M., 383, 385
 Volpato, S., 239
 von Baeyer, C. L., 176
 Von Elm, E., 31
 von Hertzen, L. C., 290
 Von Korff, M., 23, 72, 178
 von Mutius, E., 290
 von Ranson, K. M., 391, 394
 von Scheidt, M., 233
 von Strauss, E., 280
 von Zglinicki, T., 142
 Vootman, T., 406
 Vorchheimer, D., 246
 Voss, A., 341
 Voss, M. W., 412, 416
 Voursour, E., 205, 208
 Vowles, K. E., 177–178
 Vranizan, K. M., 403, 414
 Vrshek-Schallhorn, S., 149
 Vrtue, S. M., 271
 Vu, K. N., 345
 Vuolanto, P. H., 202

W

- Waber, R. L., 23
 Wada, D. R., 23
 Wadden, T. A., 383, 385
 Wade, D., 283
 Wade, S. L., 148
 Wade, T. D., 392, 393
 Wagenfeil, S., 204
 Wager, T. D., 24
 Wagner, D. T., 111
 Wagner, G. G., 210, 300
 Wagner, H. S., 152
 Wagner, I. C., 413
 Wahlberg, A., 204
 Wahlberg, J., 147, 287
 Wainer, R. B., 14
 Wainford, R. D., 228, 234
 Waite-Jones, J. M., 278
 Wakefield, M., 422
 Wakefield, M. A., 316
 Walach, H., 24, 205, 208
 Walash, A. M., 210, 213
 Walcher, T., 345
 Wald, A., 145
 Wald, H. S., 53
 Waldhoer, T., 287
 Waldrep, E., 122
 Waldrop-Valverde, D., 432
 Waldstein, S. R., 14
 Walker, A. R. P., 287, 376
 Walker, B. B., 182, 183

- Walker, B. F., 287, 376
 Walker, D. R., 178
 Walker, L. S., 165
 Walker, P., 68
 Walker, S. S., 147
 Wall, M. M., 23, 24, 384, 388
 Wall, P. D., 158, 167, 168, 173, 177
 Wall, P., 163, 165
 Wallace, R., 282
 Waller, A., 287
 Waller, G., 394
 Walls, N. E., 295
 Wallston, K. A., 432
 Walsh, B. M., 315
 Walsh, B. T., 417
 Walsh, D. A., 182
 Waltenbaugh, A. W., 314, 317
 Walter, F. M., 258
 Walter, M., 357, 368, 373, 376, 386
 Walter, P. J., 368, 373, 376, 386
 Walters, S. T., 354
 Walther, S., 390
 Wan, J., 237
 Wan, X., 47, 206
 Wang, B., 321
 Wang, B., 72, 73
 Wang, C., 32, 47, 201, 205–208, 211, 314, 393
 Wang, C.-W., 49, 208
 Wang, D. D., 263
 Wang, F., 57
 Wang, H., 23, 24
 Wang, H.-W., 239
 Wang, H.-X., 239, 281
 Wang, J., 122, 123, 228, 288
 Wang, K., 47, 206
 Wang, L., 215, 287
 Wang, M., 68, 322
 Wang, M.-Z., 258
 Wang, Q., 287
 Wang, S., 217
 Wang, S.-W., 118
 Wang, T., 244
 Wang, T. W., 311, 312
 Wang, X., 240
 Wang, X.-R., 258
 Wang, Y., 239
 Wang, Z., 24, 356, 384
 Wang, Z.-M., 258
 Wangai, P. Jr., 237
 Wannamethee, S. G., 239
 Wanzer, J., 328
 Ward, B. W., 194
 Ward, C. H., 175
 Ward, E., 260
 Ward, E. M., 255
 Ward, H., 320
 Ward, K.D., 240
 Ward, L., 202, 203
 Ward, L. C., 182, 183
 Wardle, J., 315
 Wardle, J., 49, 442
 Wareham, N., 236, 446
 Wareham, N. J., 239, 380
 Warner, R., 417
 Warren, L., 363
 Warshaw, E. M., 266
 Warton, M., 57
 Wasson, J., 285
 Watabe, H., 259
 Watanabe, T., 147
 Waterman, P. D., 434
 Waters, C. M., 199, 205
 Waterworth, D., 380
 Watkins, L. R., 137, 161
 Watsky, E., 23
 Watson, G., 423
 Watson, R. R., 237
 Wattanapenpaiboon, N., 380, 386
 Watts, S. E., 107
 Waugh, F. R., 410
 Way, B. M., 123
 Waye, K. P., 109
 Wayne, P. M., 408, 415
 Weaver, B., 267
 Weaver, M. T., 47, 49
 Webb, O. J., 79, 422
 Weber, S., 392
 Webster, A. C., 320
 Webster, G. D., 160
 Wechsler, H., 442, 443
 Wedenoja, J., 314
 Wedow, R., 315
 Weech-Maldonado, R., 48
 Weems, C. F., 107
 Wegener, S. T., 173
 Wegner, R., 344
 Wei, G. W., 236
 Wei, Y., 80, 89
 Weidenhammer, W., 204
 Weidner, G., 231, 436
 Weil, A., 205, 216
 Weil, A. T., 217
 Weil, C. M., 148
 Weil, J. M., 434
 Weinberg, B. M., 79
 Weinberger, A. H., 328
 Weinberger, S. L., 147, 241
 Weiner, A. S. B., 358
 Weiner, H., 147
 Weiner, M. F., 280, 282
 Weingart, S. N., 59, 259
 Weingert, H. B., 259
 Weinick, R. M., 432
 Weinman, J., 51, 138, 283
 Weinman, J. A., 145
 Weinstein, N., 244, 262
 Weinstein, N. D., 69, 317
 Weinstock, H., 267
 Weinstock, M. A., 266
 Weinstock, R. S., 236
 Weir, H. K., 255, 260
 Weisbrod, M., 390
 Weiss, A., 72
 Weiss, D., 122, 123
 Weiss, D. S., 151
 Weiss, J. W., 316, 324
 Weiss, S., 78, 269
 Weiss, S. M., 14
 Weissfeld, J., 28
 Weitz, R., 56, 57, 59, 188, 437, 438
 Weizblit, N., 174
 Welch, A., 236, 446
 Welk, G. J., 407, 415
 Weller, I., 150
 Wellman, R., 207, 211
 Wells, J. C. K., 377
 Wells, R. E., 202, 206
 Welsh-Bohmer, K., 206, 411, 415
 Welty, F. K., 236
 Welty, T. K., 287
 Wen, M., 431
 Wen, W., 388
 Wendel-Vos, G. C., 406, 414
 Wener, R. E., 109
 Weng, N. P., 138
 Wenger, N. K., 418
 Wenger, N. S., 203, 216
 Wenner, M., 152
 Wentworth, D., 243
 Wentzensen, N., 267
 Wenzel, S. E., 290
 Wertheim, E. H., 375, 387
 West, J., 373
 West, R., 315, 317, 328
 West, S. G., 76
 West, S. L., 324, 363
 Westert, G. P., 9
 Westerterp, K. R., 373, 408, 415
 Westling, E., 315
 Weston, P., 147, 241
 Weston, S. A., 36
 Wetli, C., 358
 Wetter, D. W., 312
 Wetter, D. W., 441, 444
 Wheaton, A. G., 377
 Whelan, H. K., 247
 Whetsel, T., 408, 415
 Whincup, P., 239
 Whitaker, K. L., 49
 White, A., 207, 211
 White, A. R., 207, 211
 White, C., III., 280, 282
 White, C. M., 71
 White, D. P., 446
 White, M. A., 393
 White, M. M., 316
 White, R. O., 432
 White, S., 315, 432, 445
 White, V. M., 316
 White, W. L., 353

- Whitehead, J., 47, 49
 Whitehead, W. E., 182
 Whitfield, D. L., 295
 Whitfield, K. E.,
 146, 436
 Whitford, H. S., 269
 Whitlock, E., 28
 Whittaker, R., 423
 Whittington, C., 88
 Whittle, L., 313, 384
 Whitwell, J. L., 279
 Whooley, M., 240
 Wichman, H.-E., 35
 Wichstrom, L., 344
 Wickel, E. E., 407, 415
 Wicklund, K. G., 267
 Wider, B., 205
 Wiebe, J. S., 118
 Wiech, K., 161
 Wiedemann, A. U., 84
 Wiegand, F., 23
 Wierenga, C. E., 388
 Wieseler-Frank, J., 161
 Wiesener, S., 202
 Wilbert-Lampen et al., 2010, 146
 Wilbert-Lampen, U., 145
 Wilbur, J., 423
 Wilcox, A.N., 258
 Wilcox, H. B., 259
 Wilding, S., 79
 Wiley, J. A., 446
 Wilfey, D. C., 393
 Wilfley, D. E., 385, 394
 Wilke, F., 358
 Wilkin, H. A., 433
 Wilkins, R., 430
 Wilkinson, A., 325
 Willaism, S. A., 71
 Wille-Bille, A., 348
 Willems, P., 315
 Willett, W. C., 232, 238, 257,
 263, 286, 345, 406, 414
 Willey, J. Z., 411, 416
 Williams, A. C. de C., 163, 175
 Williams, A. D., 423
 Williams, A. K., 165
 Williams, B., 142, 228, 234
 Williams, D. M., 384
 Williams, D. R., 8, 234, 239
 Williams, K. D., 160
 Williams, L., 122, 123
 Williams, L. J., 165
 Williams, M. T., 263
 Williams, P. G., 441
 Williams, P. T., 403, 414
 Williams, R. B., 240, 241
 Williams, R., 239
 Williams, S. L., 70
 Williamson, D. A., 390, 406
 Williamson, D. F., 385
 Williamson, P. R., 31
 Willich, S. N., 204, 207, 211, 405, 406,
 418, 422
 Willis, G., 311, 312
 Willoughby, D., 73
 Wills, T. A., 115
 Wills-Karp, M., 148
 Wilmore, J. H., 417
 Wilsnack, R. W., 391
 Wilsnack, S. C., 391
 Wilson, A. C., 165
 Wilson, A. D., 355
 Wilson, B., 174, 176
 Wilson, C., 57
 Wilson, D., 107
 Wilson, G. T., 393, 395
 Wilson, M. R., 105
 Wilson, P. W. F., 377
 Wilson, S. L., 248
 Wilson, V., 432
 Wilson-Arias, E., 283
 Wilz, G., 283
 Wimberly, S. R., 268
 Wimo, A., 280
 Winblad, B., 280, 281
 Windsor, J. A., 120
 Wing, A. L., 404, 405,
 414
 Wing, R. R., 79, 181,
 383, 385
 Wingard, D. L., 32
 Wingo, P. A., 260
 Winkley, K., 72
 Winstanley, K., 49
 Winter, J. E., 380, 386
 Winter, M., 442, 443
 Winter, W., 363
 Winterling, J., 269
 Wipfli, B. M., 410, 416
 Wisborg, K., 343
 Wise, A., 382
 Wise, E. A., 166
 Wise, J., 230
 Wise, R. A., 348
 Wise, T., 69
 Wiseman, C. V., 375, 382
 Witherington, D., 375
 Witkiewicz, K., 354, 355
 Witkin, J. E., 201
 Witt, A. A., 125
 Witt, C. M., 204, 207,
 211, 217
 Wittchen, H. U., 151
 Wittman, J. C., 280
 Wlasiuk, G., 292
 Wobbes, T., 270
 Wodey, E., 209
 Woerner, J., 344
 Wohlfahrt, J., 54
 Wohlheiter, K., 320
 Wolcott, J., 59
 Wolever, R. Q., 395
 Wolf, E., 315
 Wolf, F. M., 291
 Wolf, M. S., 432
 Wolf, S. L., 409
 Wolfgang, M. E., 344
 Wolfson, M. C., 430
 Wolin, K. Y., 407
 Wolitski, R. J.,
 122, 123
 Wolitski, R. J., 139
 Wolitski, R. J., 298
 Wonderlich, S. A., 391
 Wong, M. D., 203
 Woo, G., 298
 Wood, D., 237
 Wood, J., 166, 174, 176
 Wood, M. D., 351
 Wood, P. D., 403, 414
 Wood, P. K., 340
 Wood, R., 351
 Woodcock, J., 405, 415
 Woodhouse, A., 173
 Woods, E., 209
 Woods, J.A., 213, 214
 Woodward, C. K., 76
 Woodward, H. I., 60
 Woodward, M., 286
 Woodward, M., 72
 Woody, P. D., 61
 Wooldridge, T., 390
 Woolhandler, S., 56, 434,
 436, 439
 Woollery, T., 35
 Woollery, T. A., 321
 Woolrich, R. A., 390
 Worden, J. K., 316
 Worobey, M., 292
 Worrall-Carter, L., 72
 Wortman, C. B., 302
 Wozniak, M. A., 35
 Wray, N. P., 25
 Wright, B., 56
 Wright, C. B., 411, 416
 Wright, C. C., 175
 Wright, J., 282
 Wright, K., 444
 Wright, R., 148, 290
 Wrubel, J., 298
 Wu, A. Q., 151
 Wu, A. W., 60
 Wu, H. H. Y., 238
 Wu, J., 215
 Wu, M., 255
 Wu, M.-J., 411, 416
 Wu, P., 382, 385
 Wu, T., 383, 402, 414
 Wurm, M., 240
 Wyatt, G. E., 298
 Wyatt, H. R., 402, 414
 Wyden, P., 382

X

Xavier, D., 238
 Xiang, A., 207
 Xiao, J., 412, 416
 Xiao, R., 271
 Xiao, W., 267

Xie, C., 233
 Xie, H., 209
 Xin, L., 213, 214
 Xu, G., 285
 Xu, J., 226, 230, 234, 259, 319, 340,
 343, 356
 Xu, P., 207
 Xu, R., 271
 Xu, S., 215
 Xu, Y., 72
 Xue, C. C. L., 195, 202
 Xue, L., 263, 264
 Xutian, S., 189, 190

Y

Yabroff, K. R., 172
 Yager, J., 395
 Yager, S., 137
 Yamakawa, Y., 313
 Yamamoto-Mitani, N.,
 283, 301
 Yamashita, H., 215
 Yamawaki, S., 168
 Yan, L. L., 239, 241
 Yan, Y., 407
 Yanasak, N. E., 413, 416
 Yang, C., 345
 Yang, H.-C. Y., 271, 415
 Yang, J., 151
 Yang, W., 288
 Yang, X., 287
 Yang, Y., 138, 213,
 214, 380
 Yano, E., 258
 Yanovski, J. A., 393
 Yanovski, S. Z., 393
 Yao, S., 237
 Yao, X., 89
 Yao, Y., 32
 Yardley, I. E., 60
 Yardley, L., 409
 Yaroch, A. L., 248
 Yaserm D., 246
 Yasko, J., 270
 Yazdi, F., 211
 Ye, X., 73
 Ye, Y., 343
 Yeager, K., 298
 Yebyo, H. G., 235, 244, 246
 Yeh, G., 203, 216
 Yelin, E. H., 291
 Yellala, A., 178
 Yellon, D. M., 406, 415
 Yeragani, V. K., 341
 Yerramsetti, S. M., 201
 Yeung, A., 213, 214
 Yijn, Y.M., 378
 Yin, P., 215
 Yin, S., 432
 Yin, J., 207, 211
 Yki-Jarvinen, H., 373
 Ylven, R., 279

Yoels, W. C., 378
 Yokum, S., 393
 Yong, H.-H., 327
 Yoo, S. H., 148
 Yoon, P. W., 431
 Yoon, P. W., 432
 Yoshimura, S., 168
 Yoshino, A., 168
 You, D., 382
 Young, B., 72
 Young, D. C., 271, 415
 Young, G., 57
 Young, K. A., 356
 Young, L. R., 376
 Young, R., 178
 Younger, J., 148
 Young-Wolff, S. C., 320
 Yousof, S., 360
 Ysoff, K., 238
 Yu, B., 151
 Yu, J. A., 251
 Yu, Y., 111
 Yu, Z., 239
 Yuan, N. P., 108
 Yucha, C., 210, 213
 Yuhas, N., 282
 Yung, K. K. L., 210
 Yusuf, S., 145, 232–234,
 236–240, 244
 Yusufali, A., 233
 Yusufali, A. H., 234

Z

Zaarcadoolas, C., 445
 Zachariae, R., 144
 Zacher, M., 315
 Zacho, M., 408, 416
 Zack, J. A., 144
 Zack, M., 350
 Zagorski, B. M., 150
 Zagummy, M. J., 314
 Zaharakis, N. M., 315
 Zahran, H. S., 289
 Zainal, N. Z., 125
 Zakhari, S., 345
 Zakowski, S. G., 270
 Zambon, P., 264
 Zandi, P. P., 280
 Zanesco, A. P., 201
 Zanjani, F., 346
 Zapert, K., 53
 Zarkadoulia, E. A., 73
 Zaslavsky, A. M.,
 151, 432
 Zaslowski, C., 205
 Zautra, A. J., 11, 148
 Zawada, A., 248
 Zaza, S., 384
 Zbozinek, T. D., 69
 Zeeck, A., 391
 Zehnacker, C. H., 408, 415

Zeichner, A., 344
 Zelenko, M., 8
 Zell, B. L., 431
 Zeltzer, L. K., 207, 211
 Zeng, F., 382
 Zeng, L., 233
 Zenilman, M., 267
 Zerwic, J. J., 47, 48
 Zettler, I., 267
 Zha, W., 443
 Zhan, C., 59
 Zhan, P., 288
 Zhang, A. L., 195, 202
 Zhang, B., 288, 301, 331
 Zhang, F., 151
 Zhang, G., 443
 Zhang, H., 238
 Zhang, J., 248
 Zhang, J., 288
 Zhang, K., 178
 Zhang, M., 215
 Zhang, Q. L., 210
 Zhang, S., 270, 423
 Zhang, X., 236, 238
 Zhang, X., 317
 Zhang, Y., 202, 203
 Zhange, J., 189, 190
 Zhao, G., 445
 Zhao, H., 277
 Zhao, J., 345
 Zhen W., 384
 Zhen, C., 66, 67
 Zheng, G., 239
 Zheng, S., 205
 Zheng, X., 190
 Zhong, I., 322
 Zhou, B., 213, 214
 Zhou, B. F., 237
 Zhou, E. S., 270
 Zhou, J.-H., 137
 Zhu, J., 380
 Zhu, Y., 190
 Ziao, W., 267
 Ziegelmann, J., 84
 Ziegelmann, J. P., 78, 84
 Ziegler, H., 418
 Zielinski, J. M., 259
 Ziginskas, D., 271
 Zijlstra, G. A., 409
 Zikmund-Fisher, B. J., 276
 Zilcha-Mano, S., 24
 Zimmerman, E., 241
 Zimmerman, R. S., 50
 Zimmerman, T., 271
 Zinberg, N. E., 341
 Zipfel, S., 391
 Zipursky, R. B., 23
 Zive, M. M., 433
 Zivian, M. T., 375
 Zolnieriek, K. B., 57
 Zoogman, S., 205, 208
 Zoorob, R., 172
 Zorrilla, E. P., 150
 Zou, Y., 138

Zubaid, M., 145, 239, 240
Zubieta, J.-K., 23, 24, 160
Zubin, J., 140, 141
Zubrick, S. R., 320, 343
Zuccolo, L., 343
Zucker, N., 287

Zucker, R., 176
Zuckerman, A., 278
Zuger, A., 189
Zuniga, M., 433
Zupancic, M. L., 388
Zvolensky, M. J., 320

Zwahlen, M., 405, 406, 414
Zweben, J. E., 362
Zyazema, N. Z., 73
Zylstra, R. G., 342
Zywiak, W. H., 363

SUBJECT INDEX

A

- Abdominal fat, 373
- A-beta fibers, 158, 168
- Abstinence violation effect, 327, 423
- Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), 182
- Acetaminophen, 178
- Acetylcholine, 98
- Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS), 266
- Acrolein, 309
- Acupressure, 190, 192, 215
- Acupuncture
 - defined, 190
 - limitations of, 215
 - managing pain with, 190, 203, 209
 - reducing stress with, 205–206
- Acute pain, 163, 169, 173
- Addictions
 - alcohol and drug, 341–342
 - defined, 341
 - exercise, 414, 416, 417
 - smoking, 316–317
 - 12-step programs for, 353
- A-delta fibers, 158, 162, 168
- Adherence
 - barriers, 69
 - defining, 66
 - characteristics of treatment
 - complexity, 71
 - side effects, 70–71
 - disease severity, 70
 - environmental factors
 - cultural beliefs and norms, 73–74
 - economic factors, 72–73
 - social support, 73
 - health behavior, 75–85
 - improving adherence, 88–89
 - interaction of factors, 74–75
 - maintaining exercise programs, 420–424
 - methods of measuring, 66–68
 - nonadherence, 68
 - personal factors
 - age, 71–72
 - conscientiousness, 72
 - emotional problems, 72
 - gender, 72
 - personality patterns, 72
- Adolescents
 - alcohol use by, 339
 - asthma in, 289, 290, 291
 - diabetes in, 408–409
 - drug use by, 363
 - exercise benefits for, 407, 408, 409, 418, 420
 - overweight/obesity among, 407
 - pain sensitivity by gender, 166
 - smokeless tobacco use by, 323
 - smoking among, 313, 315–318, 321, 323
 - stress experienced by, 151
 - tobacco promotions to, 313
- Adrenal cortex, 100
- Adrenal glands, 100
- Adrenal medulla, 100
- Adrenocortical response, 100
- Adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH)
 - pituitary release of, 139
 - stress mechanisms and, 139
- Adrenomedullary response, 101
- Aerobic exercise, 401
- Afferent neurons, 158
- Aflatoxin, 262
- African Americans
 - alcohol use by, 339
 - effect of discrimination on, 146
 - health care disparities for, 431
 - pain perception by, 165
- Age
 - alcohol use and, 339
 - benefits of exercise and, 409
- Aging
 - Alzheimer's and, 280
 - back pain and, 171
 - cognitive functioning, 411
 - health care for aging population, 438, 442
- Agoraphobia, 150
- Agouti-related peptide, 370, 371
- AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), 134
 - incidence and mortality rates of, 292–294
 - Kaposi's sarcoma and, 295
 - symptoms of, 294
 - transmission of HIV, 295–296
- Alcohol, 264, 268
 - benefits of, 344–347
 - caffeine's effect with, 361
 - cardiovascular system and, 345
 - cognitive-physiological theories of use, 349–351
 - consumption trends in, 335–338, 364
 - direct hazards of, 342–344
 - effects of, 340–342, 364
 - expectancy and effects of, 349
 - health risk checklist for, 336
 - history of consumption, 335–338
 - indirect hazards from, 343–344
 - moderating intake of, 445, 446
 - moral and medical models for drunkenness, 347
 - potential for brain damage with, 356
 - prevalence of consumption, 338–340
 - real-world profile about, 336
 - reasons for drinking, 347–352, 364
 - social learning model of use, 351–352
 - suggested readings on, 365
- Alcohol abuse
 - alcohol dependency syndrome, 348, 353
 - alcohol myopia, 350–351
 - binge drinking, 339, 340, 343, 346, 360
 - changing problem drinking, 352–256, 365
 - cognitive-physiological theories and, 349–351
 - controlled drinking and, 354–355
 - disease model for alcoholism, 348
 - drinking and, 339
 - liver cirrhosis, 342
 - moral and medical models for drunkenness, 347
 - relapses and, 355–356, 365
 - social learning model and, 351–352
 - tolerance and dependency in, 341–342
- Alcohol dehydrogenase, 341
- Alcohol dependency syndrome, 348, 353
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), 330–331, 333
- Alcoholism. *See* Alcohol abuse
- Alcohol myopia, 350–351
- Aldehyde dehydrogenase, 341
- Aldehydes, 309
- Allergies, 135
- Alternative medicine, 188. *See also* Complementary and alternative medicine
- Alveolar sacs, 308
- Alzheimer's disease
 - effect on family, 283–284
 - genetic component, 280
 - helping patients with, 282–283
 - living with, 279–284
 - risk factors and prevention for, 281
- Amenorrhea, 343
- American Medical Association, 194
- Amphetamines, 358
- Amputation, 173
- Anabolic steroids, 360–361
- Anaerobic exercise, 401
- Analgesia
 - hypnosis for, 200
 - prescription drugs for, 166
- Anesthesia, 384
- Aneurysms, 226
- Anger
 - cardiovascular disease (CVD) and, 241
 - cardiovascular reactivity (CVR), 241
 - hostility and, 241
 - suppressed, 241–242
 - trait, 344
 - Type A behavior and, 240, 241
- Angina pectoris, 226, 228, 249
- ANS. *See* Autonomic nervous system
- Antibodies, 132
- Antigens, 132
- Anus, 369

Anxiety
 CVD and, 223–224
 exercise reducing, 410–411
 Anxiety disorders, 150–151
 Arteries
 blockage of, 209, 211
 effect of high blood pressure on, 207
 function of coronary, 208
 role in cardiovascular system, 207
 smoking's effect on, 319
 Arterioles, 207
 Arthritis
 pain of, 171–172
 relaxation techniques for, 180
 Arthroscopic knee surgery, 21
 Asian Americans
 alcohol use by, 339
 health care disparities for, 434, 435
 Aspirin, 178, 179
 Asthma, 148, 289–292, 298
 disease of 289–290
 managing, 290–291
 stress and, 148
 triggers for, 290
 Atheromatous plaques, 208
 Atherosclerosis, 224, 225, 226
 Atkins diet, 193
 Attitude
 views on weight and eating, 390
 Autoimmune diseases, 135
 Autonomic nervous system, 96
 Aversion therapy, 354
 Ayurveda, 190, 195

B

Barbiturates, 358
 B-cells, 131, 132, 134, 139
 Beck Depression Inventory, 175
 Behavior. *See also* Health-related
 behavior; Illness behavior
 anger and Type A, 240
 antismoking campaigns to
 change, 316
 lowering serum cholesterol,
 244–246
 observing pain-related, 164
 reducing hypertension, 244
 relating to disease, 152
 smoking cessation, 243, 247
 stress and indulgent, 152
 Behavioral cardiology, 246
 Behavioral factors
 alcohol, 264
 diet, 262–263
 sedentary lifestyle, 264
 sexual behaviors, 266–267
 smoking, 260–262
 ultraviolet light exposure, 264
 Behavioral medicine, 14, 16
 Behavioral theory
 contingency contracts, 80
 negative reinforcement, 80

positive reinforcement, 80
 punishment, 80
 Behavioral willingness, 85–86
 Behavior modification
 defined, 180
 managing pain with, 180, 183–184
 Benign or malignant, 252
 Bile salts, 369
 Binge drinking, 339, 340, 343,
 346, 360
 Binge eating, 368–371, 372
 characteristics of, 369
 compared with other eating
 disorders, 370, 372
 health recommendations for, 369
 hypoglycemia and, 367
 treatments for, 370–371
 Biofeedback, 199–200, 201
 effectiveness of, 209
 Raynaud's disease and, 210
 types of, 200
 Biopsychosocial model, 4, 11
 Blood pressure, 227–229
 consequences of, 229
 ranges of, 229
 stressors elevating, 146
 Blood sugar, 284, 286–288
 Body fat
 anabolic steroids effects in, 360
 exercise and, 402
 Body image
 college-age women with, 317
 Bone density loss, 408, 415
 Brain
 alcohol use and effect on, 341
 blocking pain with endorphins, 161
 drug effects on, 356
 gate control theory of pain and, 167–169
 high blood pressure's effect on, 228–229
 reducing pain with opiates, 161, 177
 response to emotional and physical
 pain, 160
 somatosensory cortex, 158
 Breast cancer, 254
 Bronchioles, 306, 307
 Bronchitis, 307, 308
 Bulimia
 definition, 387
 treatment, 387

C

Calories
 exercise and number burned, 403
 CAM therapy and, 202–203
 Cancer
 alcohol use and risks for, 343
 behavioral factors, 251, 259–268
 benign or malignant, 252
 changing death rate, 253–256
 chronic pain and, 172, 177
 definition, 256
 diagnosis, 269–270
 exercise and protection against,
 407–408, 415
 immune surveillance theory and,
 130–131
 incidence rates, 255
 malignant growth, 251–253
 neoplastic, 252
 passive smoking and, 322–323, 332
 psychological factors, 267
 psychological interventions, 270–271
 psychological risk factors in, 251–252
 questions in, 272
 risk factors (*See* Risk factors of cancer)
 sedentary lifestyle and, 248–249
 sexual behavior, 251
 social support for patients of, 254, 270
 suggested readings on, 256
 tumors, 251
 Capillaries, 223
 Carcinomas, 252
 Cardiac rehabilitation, 226
 Cardiologists, 240
 Cardiovascular disease (CVD). *See also*
 Coronary heart disease; Myocardial
 infarction; Risk factors for CVD;
 Stroke
 anger in, 240–241
 atherosclerosis, 224, 226, 345
 benefits of exercise on, 405–406, 413
 blood pressure and, 227–228
 changing rates of, 230–231
 chocolate and, 237
 components of cardiovascular system,
 223–228, 248
 coronary artery disease, 224–226
 coronary heart disease, 224, 404
 declining death rates from, 230
 defined, 221
 exercise risks with, 416, 419
 glucose metabolism and, 235–236
 hypertension, 228, 229
 inflammation and, 219–220
 lifestyle and, 233–234
 lowering serum cholesterol, 244
 myocardial infarction, 224
 obesity and, 237, 238
 passive smoking and, 322–323, 332
 physiological conditions in, 234–236
 preventing first heart attacks, 243–246
 psychosocial factors in, 239–243, 246
 reactivity under stress, 146–147
 real-world profile of, 220
 reducing hypertension, 244
 reducing risks of, 243–248
 rehabilitating cardiac patients, 246–248
 risk factors in, 232–243
 smoking and, 236–237, 243
 stress, depression, and anxiety in, 246–248
 stress factors in, 145
 suggested readings on, 249
 watching sports matches, 145
 weight and diet, 237–239
 Cardiovascular reactivity (CVR), 241
 and anger, 241–242

- Cardiovascular system, 221–230.
 See also Cardiovascular disease
 alcohol's effect on, 343
 coronary artery disease, 224–226
 exercise and health of, 404–407, 424
 functioning of coronary arteries, 223
 overview, 220–221, 424
 risks of exercise with CVD, 418
 stroke, 226–227
- Catecholamines, 101
- Catharsis, 122
- Central control trigger, 168
- Central nervous system (CNS), 136
- C fibers, 158, 162, 168
- CHD (coronary heart disease), 404
- Chemotherapy, 269
- Chewing tobacco, 323
- Children
 antismoking campaigns for, 324
 exercise and, 407
 passive smoking and, 323, 332
 preventing drug abuse in, 363–364
 stress experienced by, 151
- Chiropractic treatment, 194, 196, 215
- Chocolate, 237
- Cholecystokinin (CCK), 370
- Cholesterol
 exercise and levels of, 406–407, 415
 HDL, 235, 244, 406–407
 LDL, 235, 244, 406–407
- Chronic disease, 5
 asthma and, 289–291
 children and, 278
 cigarette smoking and, 319
 deaths, 6
 diabetes and, 284–286
 facing death and, 300
 future management of, 440–441
 health expectancy and, 431
 HIV and AIDS, 298
 impact of, 295–296
 living with Alzheimer's, 279–284
 real-world profile of, 276
- Chronic lower respiratory diseases, 305–306
- Chronic obstructive lung diseases (COLD), 289
- Chronic recurrent pain
 arthritis, 171–172, 173
 cancer, 172, 173
 defined, 163, 169
 fibromyalgia, 172
 headache as, 170–171, 173
 hypnosis for, 211
 low back pain, 171
 phantom limb pain, 172–173
 relaxation techniques for, 180
 syndromes and, 170, 183
- Cigarette smoking. *See also* Smoking
 advertising and, 315–316
 consumption rates for, 311
 health consequences of, 318–320, 323
 history of, 311
- Cigars, 310, 321
- Cirrhosis, 342
- Cluster headaches, 170, 171
- CNS (central nervous system), 136
- Cocaine, 358, 363
- Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), 121–122
 effectiveness of, 181
- Cognitive functioning, better, 411–413
- Cognitive-physiological theories of
 alcohol use, 349–351
- Cognitive therapy, 180, 181, 183
- COLD (chronic obstructive lung diseases), 289
- Colon Blow, 26
- Colon cancer, 26
- Colorectal cancer, 27, 255
- Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM), 188
 ayurvedic medicine, 190–191
 biofeedback, 199
 chiropractic treatment, 194
 diet and, 192–194
 dietary supplements, 192
 effectiveness of alternative treatments, 204–205
 energy healing, 195
 guided imagery, 198
 homeopathy, 191
 hypnosis, 200–201, 212
 integrative medicine, 216–217
 massage, 194–195
 meditation and yoga, 196–198
 mind-body medicine, 196–201
 naturopathy, 191
 people who use, 202–203
 practices and products for, 192
 qi gong, 198–199, 201
 real-world profile of, 189
 reasons for seeking, 203
 systems of, 188–192
 tai chi, 198–199
 traditional Chinese medicine, 189–190
 treating anxiety, stress, and depression with, 205–206, 211
- Complementary medicine, 187
- Condoms, 295–299
- Congenital insensitivity, 155
- Controlled drinking, 354–355
- Coping with stress
 emotion-focused coping, 118
 optimism, 116–117
 personal control, 116
 problem focused coping, 117
 social support, 114–116
- Coronary artery disease, 224–226
- Coronary bypass, 224–226
- Coronary heart disease (CHD), 224
 exercise and, 404–407, 418
 myocardial infarction, 224
- Correlational studies, 26–27
- Correlation coefficient, 27
- Cortisol, 100
 releasing, 139
 stress and release of, 139, 148
- Council of Chiropractic Education, 194
- Cox-2 inhibitors, 179
- Crack cocaine, 358
- Crime
 alcohol consumption and, 344
 incidents affecting college students, 443
- Crowding, 109
- Cultivating healthier lifestyles
 adopting healthier behaviors, 445–446
 health psychology's role in, 445, 446
 improving health expectancy, 430–431, 434
 increasing health literacy, 445
 knowing effect of own choices, 444
 moderation and, 446
 reducing health disparities, 431–435
 understanding personal risks, 442–445
- CVR (cardiovascular reactivity), 241
- Cytokines, 137, 139, 140, 151

D

- DARE, 363
- Dating violence, 444
- Death
 AIDS, 292
 automobile crashes, 442–443
 declining rates from CVD, 230–231
 disease and (*See* Disease and death)
 during exercise, 418
 grieving, 301–302
 rate of cancer, 253
 suicide, 444
- Delirium tremens, 341
- Dependence, 177
 alcohol dependency syndrome, 348
 alcohol misuse and, 361–362
 barbiturate and tranquilizer, 358
 drug, 177–179, 358
 exercise, 416, 417
 opiates and, 177
 table of psychoactive drug, 361
 tolerance, withdrawal, and, 341
- Depression
 Alzheimer's disease and, 280
 CVD and, 240
 defined, 410
 exercise's effect on, 410
 linked to stress, 149–150, 151, 152
 response to myocardial infarction, 246
- Diabetes mellitus
 alcohol's beneficial effect on, 345–346
 children and adolescents with, 285
 controlling with exercise, 408–409, 415
 lifestyle adjustments for, 286
 living with, 284–286
 stress and, 147–148, 287–288
 types of, 284
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) (APA), 348, 410
- Diaphragm, 306

Diastolic pressure, 228
 Diathesis-stress model, 140–141, 290
 Diet
 adding dietary supplements to, 192–193
 aflatoxin, 262
 carcinogenic, 262
 cardiac rehabilitation, 226
 Chinese medicine's view of, 189–190
 effects on Cancer, 265
 improving health with, 193
 Dietary supplements
 CAM use of, 192–193
 and natural products, 192
 reducing CVD risks, 221
 Dieting. *See also* Weight loss
 approaches to losing weight, 382–386
 behavior modification programs and, 383
 suggested readings on, 397
 weight loss with exercise vs, 377, 402
 Digestive system, 221, 344
 anus, 369
 bile salts, 369
 esophagus, 369
 feces, 369
 gall bladder, 369
 gastric juices, 368
 human body, 368
 pancreatic juices, 369
 peristalsis, 369
 pharynx, 369
 rectum, 369
 salivary glands, 369
 Dignity therapy, 301
 Discrimination
 CVD among African Americans and, 234
 reactivity due to, 146
 Disease
 death and 6–10
 diathesis-stress model of, 140–141
 role of stress in, 140–151
 Disease and death
 age, 6
 changes in life expectancy, 8–10
 chronic diseases, 6
 ethnicity, income, and disease, 6–8
 pattern, 6
 Disease model for alcoholism, 348
 Disulfiram, 354
 Dopamine, 356
 Dorsal horns, 158, 168
 Dose-response relationship, 35–36
 Double-blind design, 24
 Drug abuse
 cocaine and, 358, 363
 effect on brain, 356
 FDA drug schedule, 358
 misuse and abuse of drugs, 361–362
 prevention strategies for, 363–364
 relapses in, 363, 365
 tolerance, dependence, addiction and, 341–342
 treating, 362–363

Drugs
 acetaminophen, 178, 179
 amphetamines, 358
 anabolic steroids, 360–361
 analgesic, 177–178, 183
 aspirin, 179, 183
 barbiturates, 358
 brain's response to, 357
 cocaine, 358
 Cox-2 inhibitors, 179
 FDA classification of, 358
 hazards of legal and illegal, 356
 health recommendations for, 360
 marijuana, 357
 misuse and abuse of, 361–362
 NSAID, 179
 opiates, 177, 358
 preventing and controlling use of, 363–364
 psychoactive, 356, 357, 361
 real-world profile about, 336
 sedatives, 358
 stimulants, 358, 361
 suggested readings on, 365
 tolerance to, 341
 tranquilizers, 358
 treating eating disorders, 362–363
 DSM-5 (APA), 371, 410
 Dying role, 300–301

E

Eating. *See also* Binge eating; Diet;
 Overeating
 attitudes about, 344
 experimental overeating, 371–372
 factors in maintaining weight, 384–385
 food restriction strategies for weight loss, 383
 hormones involved in appetite and satiation, 371
 studies in experimental starvation, 370–371
 Eating disorders, 387–396. *See also* Specific disorders
 anorexia nervosa, 383–391
 binge eating, 393–396
 body dissatisfaction and, 393
 bulimia, 391–393
 cognitive behavioral therapy and, 390
 family violence and, 389
 obligatory exercisers and, 417
 e-cigarettes, 321–322
 Ecstasy, 357, 358
 Education
 alcohol consumption and, 340
 CVD risks and level of, 239
 health care disparities and, 431
 profile for smokers, 312, 313
 successes in quitting smoking and, 324–326
 Efferent neurons, 158
 Electronic cigarettes, 321–322
 EMG (electromyography), 176, 200

Emotion
 arising from chronic disease, 277
 alcohol consumption and aggressive, 350
 brain response to emotional pain, 160
 Emotion-focused coping, 118
 Emphysema, 306
 Endocrine system
 psychological and social factors affecting, 136
 Endorphins, 161, 162
 Energy healing, 195
 Environmental factors
 cancer and, 319
 passive smoking, 319, 322, 332
 vulnerability to stress related diseases, 141
 Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS), 322, 323, 332
 Epinephrine, 101
 Esophagus, 369
 Essential hypertension, 228
 Ethanol, 341
 Ethnicity
 alcohol use by, 338
 discrimination and, 129
 exercise benefits with CVD risk, 405
 life expectancy and, 431–432, 431–434
 reducing health disparities for all groups, 431–434
 smoker profiles by, 311, 316
 ETS (Environmental tobacco smoke), 322, 323, 332
 European Americans
 alcohol use by, 338
 pain perception by, 165
 reactivity due to discrimination, 146
 Exercise
 addiction to, 414, 416, 417
 age and benefits of, 409
 benefits of, 407–413, 423–424
 better cognitive functioning, 411–413
 bone density loss prevention with, 408
 cardiovascular health and, 404–407, 424
 Chinese medicine's view of, 189–190
 cholesterol levels and, 406–407
 controlling diabetes with, 408
 death during, 418
 decreasing depression with, 410, 416
 gender and cardiovascular effects of, 406
 hazards of, 414–419
 increasing for adolescents, 407, 408
 injuries from, 417–418, 419, 442–445
 obligatory, 417
 personal health risks for, 400
 preventing weight gain as ex-smoker, 331
 psychological benefits of, 409–413
 rates of coronary heart disease and, 404
 recommendations for, 420
 reducing anxiety with, 410–411
 stress and, 411
 sudden death during, 418
 tai chi, 198, 199
 types of, 399, 401
 weight control and, 402–403
 Ex post facto design, 29

F

Families
 caring for Alzheimer's patients, 282–283
 effect of chronic disease on, 277
 grieving death of member of, 301–302
 problem drinking in, 352–256
 Feces, 369
 Fetal alcohol syndrome, 343, 362
 Fibromyalgia, 166, 172, 173, 182, 183, 184
 Flavonoids, 237
 Flexibility, 402
 fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging), 160
 Food and Drug Administration (FDA), 354, 357
 Formaldehyde, 309
 Functional foods, 192
 Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), 160
 Future health challenges, 427–447
 adapting to changing needs, 440–441
 controlling rising costs, 437–439
 future of health psychology, 441, 446
 importance of prevention, 439–440
 improving health expectancy, 430–431
 increasing life expectancy, 430–431, 441
 progress in health psychology, 436
 reducing health disparities, 431–435

G

Gall bladder, 369
 Gastric juices, 369
 Gate control theory of pain, 167–169
 Gender
 alcohol consumption and, 340
 cardiovascular effects of exercise and, 406
 cardiovascular reactivity and, 233–234
 job-related stresses and, 145
 pain perception and, 166
 profile for smokers by, 311, 317
 rates of HIV infection by, 295
 use of CAM therapy by, 202–203
 Genetic predisposition
 Alzheimer's and, 279–284
 problem drinking in families, 345–346
 smoking and, 314–315
 Gestational diabetes, 285
 Ghrelin, 370, 371
 Glucagon, 284
 Glucagon-like peptide 1, 370
 Granulocytes, 132
 Grieving, 301–302
 Gross domestic product (GDP), 10
 Guided imagery, 198, 201, 206

H

Harm reduction strategy, 364
 HDL (high-density lipoprotein), 235, 244, 406, 407

Headaches
 alternative therapies for, 206, 209
 effectiveness of relaxation techniques for, 180
 stress and, 142–143
 types of chronic, 173
 Health
 biomedical model, 11
 biopsychosocial model, 11
 development of health psychology, 13
 health held by various cultures, 12
 pathogen, 11
 psychology's relevance, 13–16
 The health action process approach
 motivational phase, 83
 volitional phase, 84
 Health behavior
 continuum theories
 behavioral theory, 80
 critique of, 80–81
 health belief model, 76–77
 self-efficacy theory, 77–78
 theory of planned behavior, 78–80
 stage theories
 critique of, 84–85
 the health action process approach, 83–84
 transtheoretical model, 82–83
 Health belief model, 76–77
 Health care
 challenges for aging populations, 427–435
 increase in HMOs, 438
 reducing health disparities, 431–435, 431–436
 seeking medical attention, 43–52
 suggested readings on, 447
 Health care costs
 controlling, 437–349
 income and health care standards, 434–435
 life expectancy and, 430–431, 430–434
 suggested readings on, 447
 where money goes, 437–439
 Health disparity
 defined, 431
 educational and socioeconomic, 434–435
 LGBT, 435
 racial and ethnic, 431–434
 reducing, 431–435
 Health expectancy
 definition of, 430, 442
 life expectancy and, 430
 by nation, 438
 Health literacy, 432, 433, 436, 441, 445
 Health maintenance organizations (HMOs), 438
 Health psychology
 applying personally, 442–446
 biopsychosocial model of health, 4
 changing field, 3
 chronic diseases, 5
 clinical health psychologists, 16
 contributing to Healthy People 2030
 goals, 429, 447
 COVID-19 pandemic, 4
 cultivating healthy lifestyle with, 445–446
 disease and death, 6–10
 escalating cost of medical care, 10
 future of, 441, 447
 health- and disease-related outcomes, 15
 life expectancy, 3
 managing diabetes with, 287–288
 progress in, 436
 work, 16, 18
 Health recommendations
 adopting healthier behaviors, 445–446
 alcohol and, 360
 drugs and, 360
 smoking and, 329
 Health research
 psychoneuroimmunology, 136–140
 questions in, 18
 Healthy People 2030
 goals, 436
 health disparity, 431
 health indicators, 429
 objectives of, 429
 Heart. *See also* Coronary heart disease
 angina pectoris, 226, 228, 249
 coronary heart disease and, 224
 functioning of coronary arteries, 223
 illustrated, 224
 myocardium, 224
 preventing first heart attacks, 243–246
 Heroin, 327, 337
 Heterosexual transmission of HIV, 296
 High-density lipoprotein (HDL), 406, 407
 High-fiber content, 26
 Highly active antiviral therapy (HAART), 296
 Hispanic Americans
 alcohol use by, 339
 health care disparities for, 431, 432, 434
 pain perception by, 165
 vulnerability to PTSD, 150
 HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), 134–135
 epidemics of AIDS and, 293
 incidence and mortality rates of, 292–294
 injection drugs as risk factor in, 295–296
 protective measures against, 296–297
 psychologist's role in managing, 296–299
 role of stress in, 145
 symptoms of, 294–295
 testing for, 296
 transmission of, 295–296
 HMOs (health maintenance organizations), 438
 Homeopathy, 191, 215
 Hormones
 effect of stress, 145, 148
 Hospital patient role, 59–60
 Human papillomavirus (HPV), 267
 Humoral immunity, 132
 Hydrocyanic acid, 309
 Hygiene hypothesis for asthma, 290

Hypertension
 blood pressure ranges for stages of, 228
 cardiovascular reactivity and, 232
 CVD risk and, 228
 defined, 146, 234
 reducing, 234–236
 Hypnosis
 effectiveness of, 209
 managing pain with, 200–201, 209
 Hypothalamus, 369

I
 Illegal drugs
 risks of, 358, 361
 Illness
 immune system disorders and, 133–136
 Illness behavior
 age, 48
 conceptualization of disease, 50–51
 gender differences, 47–48
 personal factor, 46–47
 socioeconomic, ethnic, and cultural factors, 48–49
 stigma, 49
 symptom characteristics, 49–50
 Immune deficiency, 133
 Immune system, 129–135
 B- and T-cells, 131, 134, 135
 depression and immune function, 149–150
 disorders of, 133–136
 function of, 131–133
 interactions with nervous system, 136
 nonspecific responses of, 132, 136
 organs of, 130–131
 overview, 129
 primary and secondary immune responses, 135
 psychological and social factors affecting, 136
 specific responses of, 132
 stress and function of, 139–140
 weakened by stress, 139
 Immunity, 132, 133
 Implementational intentions, 86–87
 Income
 access to health care and, 434–435
 correlating health care standards and, 434–435
 health care standards and, 435
 Induction, 200, 201
 Infectious disease
 and stress, 143–145
 Inflammation, 132
 cancer risks and chronic, 226
 function of, 131–133
 illustrated, 132
 Inherent risks, cancer
 advancing age, 257
 background, 257
 family history and genetics, 257–258
 Injuries
 exercise-related, 417–418, 425
 understanding personal risk of, 442–445

Insensitivity to pain, 155
 Insulin, 284, 370
 Insurance
 health care cost increases for, 438
 per capita care expenditures, 439
 Integrative medicine, 187, 216–217
 Intention–behavior gap
 behavioral willingness, 85–86
 implementational intentions, 86–87
 INTERHEART study, 145
 Interleukins, 137
 International health
 cardiovascular disease, 231
 CVD risks by gender and country, 231
 Internet, 53, 277, 283, 295
 Interneurons, 158
 Ischemia, 224
 Islet cells, 284
 Isokinetic exercise, 401
 Isometric exercise, 399
 Isotonic exercise, 399, 401

K
 Kaposi's sarcoma, 266
 Korsakoff syndrome, 342, 345

L
 Lactovegetarian diet, 193
 Laminae, 158
 Lay referral network, 53–55
 Lazarus's view
 coping, 106
 primary appraisal, 105
 psychological factors, 105
 reappraisal, 106
 secondary appraisal, 105
 LDL (low-density lipoprotein), 235, 236, 406, 407
 Leptin, 370
 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) health disparities, 435
 Leukemias, 252
 Leukocytes, 130
 LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender), 435
 Life events
 difficulty linking stress to, 141
 Life expectancy
 costs of greater, 436–442
 health expectancy and, 430–431
 infant mortality, 9
 vaccination, 10
 in the United States, 436
 Life Skills Training program, The, 363
 Lifestyle
 cultivating health, 445–446
 effects of personal, 445
 optimistic bias and change in, 244
 real-world profile of healthier, 428
 stress related to, 152

Lipoproteins, 235
 Liver
 cirrhosis of, 342
 Living with cancer
 medical treatments, 268–269
 social support, 268
 Low back pain
 alternative therapies for, 211–212
 chronic, 171
 relaxation techniques for, 180, 183
 Low-density lipoprotein (LDL), 235, 236, 406, 407
 Lung cancer, 254
 passive smoking and, 322–323
 Lymph, 130
 Lymphatic system, 130
 Lymph nodes, 130
 Lymphocytes, 131
 Lymphomas, 252

M
 Macrobiotic diet, 193
 Macrophages, 132
 Managing pain, 177–180
 acupuncture for, 190, 203
 behavioral techniques for, 180–183
 cognitive behavioral therapy for, 181–182
 drugs for, 177–179
 guided imagery for, 198
 hypnosis for, 200–201
 overview, 177
 surgery for, 180, 183
 Managing stress
 cognitive behavioral therapy, 121–122
 emotional disclosure, 122–124
 mindfulness, 124–125
 relaxation training, 119–120
 Marijuana, 357, 358, 360
 Marriage, 138
 Massage, 194–195
 Ayurvedic, 190–191
 tui na, 190, 192, 195
 Materia Medica, 190
 McGill Pain Questionnaire (MPQ), 175
 Measurement
 pain, 174–177, 184
 Measurement of stress
 everyday hassles scales, 113–114
 life events scales, 113
 physiological measures, 112–113
 Medical care
 consult, practitioner
 personal characteristics, 58
 practitioner–patient interaction, 56–57
 verbal communication, 57
 hospitalization
 children, 60–61
 hospital patient role, 59–60
 limited access, 55–56
 Medical information, nonmedical sources
 the internet, 53
 lay referral network, 53–55
 Medical qi gong, 198

Meditation
 reducing anxiety, stress, and depression
 with, 205–206
 types of, 196–198
 Medulla, 161
 Memory loss, 280, 282
 Memory lymphocytes, 132
 Men
 alcohol consumption by, 338–340
 cardiovascular effects of exercise for, 406
 death from AIDS, 293
 job-related stress for, 145
 marriage and social support for, 138
 mortality rates for CVD, 230
 pain perception of, 166
 rates of HIV infection for, 292, 293
 risk factors for smokers, 319
 smoking by, 311–313
 stress and CVD, 145
 use of CAM therapy by, 202–203
 Meridians, 189
 Mesmerism, 200
 Metabolic syndrome, 236
 Migraine headaches, 170
 Mind-body medicine, 196–201
 biofeedback, 199–200, 201
 defined, 196, 201
 hypnosis, 200–201, 209
 meditation and yoga, 196–198
 overview, 196
 qi gong, 198–199, 201
 tai chi, 198, 199, 201, 207
 Mind-body medicine, 201
 Mindfulness, 180, 182
 Mindfulness meditation, 198, 201
 MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory), 177
 Moderation, 446
 management, 353
 Morphine, 357
 Mortality
 alcohol and rate of, 345
 automobile crashes and, 442–443
 CVD death rates, 230–231
 exercise and, 400, 414–415
 HIV and AIDS rates of, 292–293
 quitting smoking and reduced rate of, 331
 suicide and, 444
 Motivational interviewing, 89
 MPI (Multidimensional Pain Inventory), 175
 Muscle strength and endurance, 402
 Myelin, 158
 Myocardial infarction
 defined, 224
 depression after, 246

N

Naltrexone, 354, 356
 Narcotics Anonymous (NA), 362, 363
 NASPE (National Association for Sport and Physical Education), 409
 National Center for Health Statistics
 [NCHS], 6

Native Americans
 alcohol use by, 338
 health care disparities for, 431–432
 Natural killer (NK) cells, 131
 Naturopathy, 191, 192, 215
 Negative reinforcement, 317
 Nerves, 158
 Nervous system
 central, 136
 neuroendocrine system (*See* Neuroendocrine system)
 peripheral nervous system (*See* Peripheral nervous system)
 registering pain, 155, 184
 stress effects on, 139–140
 stress response
 allostasis, 102
 hypothalamicpituitary-adrenal, 102
 perception, 101
 Neuroendocrine system
 adrenal gland, 100–101
 hormones, 98–99
 pituitary gland, 100
 Neuromatrix, 173
 Neuromatrix theory, 169
 Neurons, 96
 afferent and efferent, 158
 Neuropeptide Y, 371
 Neurotransmitters, 96
 dopamine, 314
 drug effects on, 356
 perception of pain and, 160–161
 Nicotine. *See also* Smoking
 addiction to, 309
 physiological effects of, 317
 Nicotine replacement therapy, 325
 Nitric oxide, 309
 NK (natural killer) cells, 131
 Nocebo effect, 23
 Nociceptors, 158
 Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, 267
 Norepinephrine, 98
 NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs), 179
 Nurses' Health Study, 406

O

Obesity
 adolescents and, 375
 BMI as measure of, 349–350, 356
 body fat and, 373
 CVD risks and, 237
 defining, 373–376
 exercise and weight control, 376–377, 402–403
 fashion and weight, 350
 genetic tendency to, 376–377
 health risks of, 355–356
 increases in, 351
 positive incentive model of, 378–379
 setpoint model, 376
 sleep deprivation and, 377
 studies on, 376

Obligatory exercisers, 417
 Oncologists, 268
 Oncology, integrative, 216–217
 Opiates, pain reduction with, 161
 Optimism, 116–117, 276, 277, 286
 Optimistic bias
 lifestyle changes and, 244
 smoking and, 317
 Ornish diet, 192, 193, 247
 Osteoarthritis
 alternative therapies for, 211
 pain and, 172
 Osteoporosis, 408, 415
 Overeating. *See also* Binge eating
 experimental, 370–372
 obesity and, 373–379

P

Pain
 acute, chronic, and prechronic, 163, 169, 173
 arthritis, 171–172, 184
 assessing, 174
 brain and, 158–160
 cancer, 172
 cultural perceptions of, 165–166
 fibromyalgia, 172
 gate control theory of, 167–169
 gender and perception of, 166
 guided imagery for managing, 198, 206, 211
 headache, 170–171, 184
 individual experiences of, 163–164
 insensitivity to, 155
 low back, 171
 managing, 177–183
 meaning of, 162–166, 184
 measuring, 174–177, 184
 modulating, 161–162
 neuromatrix theory of, 169
 neurotransmitters and, 160–161
 pain syndromes, 169–170, 169–174, 184
 physiological measurements, 176–177
 psychological and physical factors in, 163
 reducing with opiates, 161
 somatosensory system and, 157–158
 specificity theory of, 166
 spinal cord and, 158
 surgery for managing, 180
 theories of, 166–169
 views of, 163
 Pain inoculation, 181
 Pain-prone personalities, 165
 Pain questionnaires, 175
 Pain syndromes, 169–170, 184
 alternative treatments for, 210–214
 arthritis, 171–172
 headache, 170–171
 phantom limb, 173
 related to cancer, 172

- Pain traps, 180, 181
 Pancreatic juices, 369
 Parasympathetic nervous system, 97
 Passive smoking and, 322–323
 Patients
 adapting to terminal illness, 300–302
 effect of chronic disease on, 276–277
 helping Alzheimer's, 282
 rehabilitating from CVD, 246–247
 Peptide YY, 371
 Periaqueductal gray, 161
 Periodontal disease, CVD, 320
 Peripheral nervous system (PNS)
 acetylcholine, 98
 autonomic, 96
 neural impulses and, 156
 norepinephrine, 98
 parasympathetic, 97
 somatic, 96
 sympathetic, 97
 Peristalsis, 369
 Personal control, 116
 Personal factors
 effects of lifestyle on health, 152, 445
 individual's experience of pain, 163–164
 understanding personal health risks, 442–445
 vulnerability to stress related diseases, 141
 Personal health inventories
 alcohol, 336
 exercise, 400
 physical fitness and, 402
 smoking, 305
 PET (positron emission tomography), 160
 Phagocytosis, 132, 139
 Phantom limb pain, 173
 Pharynx, 343, 369
 Physiology
 alcohol's effect on, 341, 349
 diabetes, 284–286
 effect of stress on, 139–140
 exercise and, 401–402
 immune system, 129–135
 mind–body medicine, 201
 physiological measurements of pain, 176–177
 smoking's effect on lungs, 322
 Pipe smoking, 321, 332
 Pituitary gland, 100
 Placebo
 defined, 21
 double-blind design, 24
 expectancy, 24
 nocebo effect, 23–24
 testing disease model of alcohol with, 349
 Placebo effect
 antidepressant drugs, 23
 double-blind design, 24
 single-blind design, 24
 sugar pills, 22
 Plasma cells, 132
 Population density, 109
 Positive reinforcers, 180
 Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 107
 linked to stress, 150
 Poverty
 smoking and, 312
 Practitioners
 dealing with patients with chronic disease, 276–278
 Practitioner–patient interaction, 56–57
 Prechronic pain, 163, 169
 Pregnancy
 alcohol's effect on fetus, 343
 risks for women smokers, 321
 Prevention
 Alzheimer's disease, 281
 bone density loss, 408, 424
 cancer, 407–408, 424, 425
 CVD, 243–246
 drug abuse, 363–364
 primary and secondary, 440–441
 relapses for smokers, 326, 327
 weight gain for ex-smokers, 331
 Primary afferents, 158
 Primary appraisal, 105
 Primary prevention, 440–441
 Pritikin diet, 193
 Problem focused coping, 117
 Progressive muscle relaxation, 180
 Prohibition, 338
 Proinflammatory cytokines, 161
 Project D.A.R.E., 324
 Prostate cancer, 254
 Psychoactive drugs, 361
 characteristics of, 359
 effect on brain, 357
 Psychological disorders and stress, 148–151, 152
 Psychological factors
 exercise and, 409–413
 in pain, 163
 Psychological tests for pain, 175–176
 Psychologists
 smoking interventions by, 326
 helping people with HIV, 297–298
 Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI), 136–140
 effect of stress on physiology, 139–140
 history of, 136–137
 overview, 136
 relating behavior to disease, 152
 research in, 137–139
 Psychosocial stresses
 CVD and, 239–240
 Psychosomatic medicine, 13–14
 Psychotherapy, treating alcoholism with, 353–354
 preventing relapses, 327–328
 weight gain and, 329–331
 who succeeds in, 326–327
-
- ## R
- Radiation, 268
 Randomized, controlled trials
 testing alternative treatments with, 204–205
 Rape, 443
 Rating scales
 pain assessment, 174
 Social Readjustment Rating Scale, 141
 Visual Analog Scale, 174
 Raynaud's disease, 210
 Reappraisal, 106
 Recovery
 alcoholics anonymous and, 353
 chemical treatments for, 354
 methods of alcoholism treatment and, 353–354
 psychotherapy treatments in, 353–354
 Rectum, 369
 Relapses
 drug abuse, 363
 preventing smoking, 327–328
 problems with alcohol, 355–356, 365
 Relaxation training, 119–120
 pain management with, 180
 Religion, 340
 Research methods
 in epidemiology
 Alameda County Study, 32–34
 case–control studies, 30
 clinical trial, 31
 incidence, 30
 meta-analysis, 32
 observational studies, 30
 prevalence, 30
 prospective studies, 30
 randomized, controlled trials, 30–31
 retrospective studies, 30
 risk factor, 30
 self-selection, 31
 in psychology
 control group, 28
 correlational studies, 26–27
 cross-sectional studies, 27–28
 dependent variable, 28
 experimental group, 28
 ex post facto design, 29
 independent variable, 28
 longitudinal studies, 27–28
 Research tools
 role of psychometrics
 reliability, 38
 validity, 38
 role of theory, 37–38
 Respiratory system
 alcohol use and, 343
 chronic diseases of lower, 305–306, 319
 functioning of, 306–308
-
- ## Q
- Qi, 189, 190
 Qi gong, 190, 198
 Quitting smoking, 324–326
 health benefits of, 328, 329–331

illustrated, 307
 smoking and, 306–309, 332
 Rheumatoid arthritis
 defined, 148
 relaxation techniques and, 180
 Risk factor
 Alzheimer's, 281
 death during exercise, 418
 determining causation, 34–37
 lung cancer, 34–37
 understanding personal, 442–445
 Risk factor approach
 absolute risk, 34
 relative risk, 35
 Risk factors for cancer, 342–344
 environmental risks,
 environmental risk factors, 258–259, 319
 inherent risks, 257–258
 Risk factors for CVD
 changing lifestyle to lower, 232
 glucose metabolism and, 235
 inflammation and, 236
 inherent, 232–234
 obesity, 220
 physiological factors, 234–236
 psychosocial factors, 239–242
 reducing risks of disease, 226–231
 smoking and, 236–237, 319
 weight and diet, 237–238
 Rumination, 148, 241

S

Salivary glands, 369
 Sarcomas, 252
 Secondary appraisal, 105
 Secondary prevention, 441
 Sedatives, 358
 Sedentary lifestyle, 264, 424
 asthma and, 290
 depression and, 410
 weight control and, 402
 Selenium, 263
 Self-care, 440
 Self-efficacy
 exercise maintenance and, 422–423
 Self-efficacy theory
 outcome expectations, 78
 reciprocal determinism, 77
 self-efficacy, 77
 Self-reports
 measuring pain with, 174–176
 Selye's View
 criticism of, 105
 evaluation of, 104
 exhaustion stage, 104
 GAS, 103–104
 resistance stage, 104
 Serotonin, 358
 Sexual behavior, 266–267
 drinking and unprotected, 351
 HIV infection and heterosexual contact,
 295

homosexual transmission of HIV,
 295–296
 Shiatsu massage, 195
 Sick role behavior, 46, 51–52
 Single-blind design, 24
 Skin
 pain receptors on, 158, 162
 Sleep
 improved, 408
 recommended amounts of, 446
 Small intestine, 371
 Smartphones, 441
 Smokeless tobacco, 323, 332
 Smokers
 advertising attracting, 315–316
 genetic predisposition of, 314–315, 318
 health recommendations for, 329
 nicotine addiction of, 317
 optimistic bias of, 317
 preventing relapses by, 327
 profiling, 311–313, 332
 quitting smoking, 324–326
 rates of cigarette consumption by, 311
 reinforcement for, 317
 social pressure on, 315
 successes in quitting, 326–327
 weight control motivating, 317, 322
 why they start, 313–314
 young people as, 312–313, 315, 328
 Smoking
 advertising and, 315–316
 cancer deaths related to, 319
 choosing to, 310–311, 332
 cigar and pipe, 321, 332
 consequences of, 318–320, 323
 CVD and, 236, 243, 319
 dangerous components in, 309
 deaths from, 305
 detering, 324
 effect on respiratory system,
 306–309, 332
 genetics and, 314–315, 318
 health benefits of quitting, 331
 history of tobacco use and, 309–310
 nicotine addiction and, 317
 optimistic bias and, 317
 other health effects of, 309
 passive, 322–323, 332
 perceived risk, 262
 personal health inventory for, 305
 profiling smokers and nonsmokers,
 311–313, 332
 quitting, 324–326, 332
 rates among young people, 312–313,
 315, 328
 real-world profile on, 306
 reasons for starting, 313–314
 refraining from, 445, 446
 reinforcement motivating, 317
 relapse prevention, 327–328
 risk, 261
 social pressure and, 315
 weight control with, 317, 322
 Snuff, 310

Social contacts, 114
 Social isolation, 114
 Social network, 114
 Social pressure
 smoking and, 315
 social learning model of drinking, 351
 Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS),
 141
 Social support, 114–116
 college students' need for, 446
 CVD risk factors and, 223
 drug abuse and, 365
 quitting smoking and, 328
 Somatic nervous system, 96
 Somatosensory cortex, 158, 162
 Somatosensory system, 157–158
 Sources of stress
 cataclysmic events, 106–108
 daily hassles
 physical environment, 108–110
 psychosocial environment, 110–111
 life events, 108
 Specificity theory of pain, 166
 Spinal cord, 158, 162, 167–168
 Spleen, 131
 Spontaneous remission, 330
 SRD (stress response dampening) effect, 349
 SRRS (Social Readjustment Rating Scale),
 141
 Stage theory, 301
 State anxiety, 410
 Steroids, 360–361
 Stimulants, 358, 361
 Stomach cancer, 255
 Stress
 alcohol myopia and, 349–350
 anxiety disorders and, 150, 165
 asthma and, 148
 caregiving and, 278
 college students and, 445
 CVD and, 145, 152
 depression, 149–150
 diabetes and, 147–148, 283
 diathesis-stress model, 140–141
 effect on lifestyle, 152
 exercise's effect on, 411, 413
 headaches and, 142–143
 hypertension and, 146
 immune function lowered under, 139–140
 infectious disease and, 143–145
 linking to disease, 141–148
 low back pain and, 171
 posttraumatic stress disorder, 150
 psychological disorders linked to, 148–150
 reactivity under, 146–147
 rheumatoid arthritis and, 148
 role in disease, 142, 152
 Selye's view of, 141
 during sports matches, 145
 ulcers and, 147
 Stress response dampening (SRD) effect, 349
 Stroke
 common, 226
 defined, 226

Stroke (*continued*)
 effects of, 226
 hemorrhagic, 226
 high blood pressure and, 227
 inflammation and, 236
 Substantia gelatinosa, 158, 161, 168
 Suicide
 alcohol consumption and attempted, 344
 understanding risks of, 444
 Suppressed anger, 241–242
 Sympathetic nervous system, 97
 Symptom Checklist-90, 175
 Synaptic cleft, 96
 Syndromes
 alcohol dependency, 348, 353
 fetal alcohol, 343
 Korsakoff, 342, 345
 metabolic, 236
 Synergistic effect, 261
 Systolic pressure, 228

T

Tai chi, 198, 199, 201, 212
 effectiveness of, 198
 Tars, 309
 T-cells, 132, 134, 135, 138, 139
 Telomeres, 141–142
 Temperance, 337
 Tension headaches, 171, 208
 TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation), 179
 Thalamus, 158
 Theories of stress
 Lazarus's View (*See* Lazarus's View)
 Selye's View (*See* Selye's View)
 Thermal biofeedback, 200
 Thymosin, 131
 Thymus, 131
 Tobacco
 cigar and pipe smoking, 321, 322
 cigarette consumption per person, 311
 health consequences of cigarettes, 318–321, 323
 history of use, 309–310
 passive smoking, 322–323, 332
 smokeless, 323, 332
 Tolerance
 defined, 341
 drug, 177
 table of psychoactive drug, 359
 tranquilizers and, 358
 Tonsils, 131

Traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), 189–190
 Trait anxiety, 410
 Tranquilizers, 358
 Transcendental meditation, 196–198, 201
 Treatment effectiveness
 of cognitive behavioral therapy, 181–182
 Treatments
 changing problem drinking, 353–354, 365
 drug abuse, 362–364
 Triglycerides, 235
 Tui na massage, 191, 195
 Tumors
 Type A behavior, 241

U

Ugandan diet, 26
 Ulcers, 147
 Ultraviolet light exposure, 264
 Urban press, 108

V

Vaccination, 132, 144
 VAS (Visual Analog Scale), 174
 Vegetarian diet, 193
 Veins, 223
 Venules, 223
 Verbal communication, 57
 Violence
 incidents among young people, 442–445
 VLDL (very low-density lipoprotein), 235

W

Weight
 appetite and satiation, 371
 controlling with smoking, 329–331
 eating disorders, 387
 exercise and control of, 402–403, 414
 experimental overeating, 371
 factors in maintaining, 346–348
 importance of maintaining healthy, 445–446
 obesity, 372–380

obesity and CVD risks, 237–238
 overeating, 372
 starvation, 370–371
 Weight gain, diet and
 quitting smoking and, 329, 331
 Weight loss. *See also* Dieting; Eating disorders
 adolescents and, 391
 behavior modification for, 383
 drastic methods for, 384
 exercise and, 383–384, 402–403
 food, 381
 maintaining, 384–386
 methods for losing weight, 384–385
 surgeries for, 384
 triggering anorexia nervosa, 387
 Weight maintenance
 calorie intake and, 383
 factors promoting overeating, 384
 importance of healthy, 445–446
 maintaining weight loss, 384–385
 Well-year, 430
 West Haven-Yale Multidimensional Pain Inventory (WHYMPI), 175
 WHO (World Health Organization), 231, 313, 318
 Withdrawal, 341
 Women
 alcohol consumption by, 337, 341
 cardiovascular effects of exercise for, 406
 death from AIDS, 292, 293
 inherent CVD risk factors for, 232
 job-related stress for, 145
 mortality rates for CVD, 230
 pain perception of, 166
 risk factors for smokers, 317
 smoking by, 310
 stress factors and CVD, 146
 use of CAM therapy by, 202–203
 World Health Organization (WHO), 231, 313, 318

Y

Yang, 190
 Yin, 190
 Yoga, 196–198

Z

Zone diet, 193

